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# NOTES,

## CRITICAL AND PRACTICAL,

ON THE BOOK OF

# JUDGES:

DESIGNED AS A GENERAL HELP TO

## BIBLICAL READING AND INSTRUCTION.

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# INTRODUCTION.

### § 1. *Title; its Origin and Import.*

The seventh book in the received order of the Hebrew Scriptures is termed שופטים *Shophetim*, *Judges;* a name derived from שפט *shaphat*, *to judge*, *to determine causes*, *to do justice*, *to vindicate;* and also, in general, *to rule*, *govern*, *regulate*, and applied here to the chief rulers who governed the Hebrew Republic from the days of Moses till the time of Saul, because *ruling* and *judging* are so intimately connected in the East, that sitting in judgment is one of the principal employments of the oriental sovereign. From this it will be seen that the title, as thus applied, is to be taken in a wider sense than the same term conveys with us, viz., persons appointed to determine litigated questions, and to pronounce the sentence of the law in criminal cases. Here, on the other hand, it is used to denote those occasional leaders and chief magistrates of the Israelites who led out the people to war against their enemies, and after having delivered them from the oppression of the neighboring nations, exercised each during peace the office of chief ruler and judge of Israel. Still the predominant idea conveyed by the term is rather that of military commanders, or more properly *avenging deliverers*, than of judicial officers, as this latter function came more within the province of the priests.

As the government of the Hebrew nation was strictly a Theocracy, in which Jehovah himself was the chief magistrate, no provision was made for the appointment of any permanent or general ruler of the people. The High Priest was a kind of prime minister of Jehovah, who exercised a general superintendence over all the great interests of the nation, when there was no civil or military ruler especially chosen for the purpose. Each of the tribes had also their respective chiefs, clothed with the primitive patriarchal powers, and in the ordinary state of things these arrangements were sufficient for the due administration of the affairs of the people. But when peculiar emergencies arose, in consequence of the hostilities provoked by the apostasy and rebellion of the Israelites, extraordinary officers were called into requisition, on whom was bestowed the appellation of *Judges*. They arose from time to time, as their agency was needed, and for the most part when the tokens of a public repentance induced God to compassionate their calamities, and afford them deliverance. They were sometimes called by God himself to the office they sustained, and sometimes elected by the people. The authority with which they were clothed on their first appointment, was in some instances surrendered when they had achieved the objects to which it was owing, and in others was continued during life. They were not all, however, military leaders, and some of them appear to have ruled simultaneously over different tribes; and this is one of the circumstances which render the chronology of this period so perplexing

'They did not,' says Mr. Kitto, 'transmit their dignity to their descendants, neither did they appoint successors. They could not enact laws or impose taxes on the people, though they made peace or war, and in their judicial capacity decided causes without appeal. Yet all this power seems to have been rather the result of character and influence, than of any authority recognized as inherent in the office. No salary or income was attached to it, nor did they receive emoluments of any kind. They had no external marks of distinction; they were surrounded by no circumstances of pomp or ceremony; they had no courtiers, guard, train, or equipage. They were, in general, men of moderate desires, and content to deserve well of their country, without seeking to aggrandize or enrich themselves. They always considered and conducted themselves as specially called of God, relying upon him in all their enterprises, and making it their chief care to bring their countrymen to acknowledge, worship, and obey him. Though evincing in some melancholy instances the infirmities of human nature, yet they were on the whole models of true patriotism and of moral worth, and eminently free from the public crimes, which in all ages have so notoriously flown from the possession and the lust of power.'

It is worthy of remark, that the Carthaginians, who were descended from the Tyrians, and spoke Hebrew, called their chief magistrates by the same name: but the Latins, whose language lacks the *sh* of the ancient Hebrews and Carthaginians, wrote the word with a sharp *s*, and adding a Latin termination, denominated them *Suffetes;* a class of functionaries very nearly resembling the *archons* of the Athenians, and the *dictators* of the Romans.

## § 2. *Author and Age.*

The authorship of the book cannot be determined with absolute certainty. Some ascribe it to Samuel, some to Hezekiah, and some to Ezra, who is supposed to have compiled it from the memoirs furnished by the respective judges of their own government. This hypothesis is founded mainly on what is said ch. 18. 30, 'He and his son were priests to the tribe of Dan, until the day of the captivity of the land,' from which it has been imagined that it was not written till after the Babylonish captivity. But this conjecture is evidently erroneous; as upon comparing Ps. 78. 60, 61, and 1 Sam. 4. 11, with that passage, it appears that the captivity intended by the historian was a particular captivity of the tribe of Dan, or of that part of it which was settled in the north, and which took place about the time the ark was taken by the Philistines. Besides, the total absence of Chaldee words sufficiently proves the date of the book to have been several centuries anterior to the great Babylonish captivity. Such words are of frequent occurrence in books known to have been written posterior to that event. Most of the Jewish and Christian commentators assign the authorship to Samuel; probably because internal evidence places it pretty clearly about his time, and in his time he is the most likely person to whom the writing of it could be ascribed. That it was written after the establishment of the regal government, appears from the habit the author has of saying, that such and such events happened in the time when 'there was no king in Israel;' which renders it evident that there *was* a king when he wrote. But that it was written very soon after the establishment of kingly government is no less clear from other passages. Thus we see, from ch. 1. 21, that the Jebusites were still in Jerusalem in the time of the author; but this people were expelled from that city early in the reign of David, 2 Sam. 5. 6. So also in 2 Sam. 11. 21, there is a distinct reference to a fact recorded Judg. 9. 53, which affords another proof that this book was written before the second of Samuel. On the whole, there is little doubt that the book of Judges was composed in its present form, either in the reign of Saul or during the first seven years of the reign of David, and this renders it more probable that it was compiled from the public registers and records by Samuel, than by any of the other prophets, priests, or kings, to whom it has been attributed.

## § 3. *Structure and Division.*

The book is not constructed with reference to the precise chronological order of the events narrated. It is clearly divisible into two leading parts; the first embracing the history of the Judges from Othniel to Samson, and extending to the end of the sixteenth chapter; the other, occupying the rest of the book, forms a sort of appendix, narrating certain memorable transactions which occurred not long after the death of Joshua, but which are thrown together at the end of the book, that the continuous thread of the preceding narrative might not be interrupted What relates to the two last Judges, Eli and Samuel, is related in the following book.

## § 4. *Chronology.*

The Chronology of this book is exceedingly embarrassed and difficult, and there is little agreement among learned men respecting it. This arises chiefly from the facts related being reckoned from different eras which cannot now be exactly ascertained; and also from judges being thought by some to be *successive*, whom others consider to have been *contemporary* in different parts of Palestine. Without reciting the details of the different hypotheses proposed to solve these difficulties, it may be sufficient to state, that Dr. Hales makes the whole period from the death of Joshua to the death of Samson to be 400 years, while Usher and Lightfoot make it not far from 300. After all it is doubtful whether, from the nature of the book, it is possible to adjust the narrative into a regular chronological series. It appears, for the most part, to have been composed of loose historical memoranda, having little relation to each other, and put together by the compiler, like the narratives of the Evangelists in the New Testament, without the least view to a methodical arrangement. Accordingly in our remarks on the book we purposely leave all chronological questions untouched.

## § 5. *Scope and Character.*

The book of Judges forms an important link in the history of the Israelites, and is very properly inserted between the books of Joshua and Samuel, as the Judges were the intermediate governors between Joshua and the kings of Israel. It furnishes a lively description of a fluctuating and unsettled people, a striking picture of the disorders and dangers which prevailed in a republic without magistracy, when 'the highways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through by-ways,' when few prophets arose to control the people, and 'every one did that which was right in his own eyes.' It exhibits the contest of true religion with superstition; displays the benefits that flow from the former; and represents the miseries and evil consequences of impiety; affording, in fine, a complete verification of the warnings and predictions of Moses, that the children of Israel should be prosperous or unfortunate, according as they obeyed or violated the divine commands. From the scenes of discord and violence which darken this history, Paul has presented us with some illustrious examples of faith, in the instances of Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthah; and Dr. Graves remarks, that 'by a superficial reader, the whole period under the Judges may be easily mistaken for an uninterrupted series of idolatries and crimes, from his not observing that the lapses which incurred punishment, and the divine deliverances which attended repentance, are related so fully as to occupy almost the whole narrative; while long periods, when, under the government of the Judges, the people followed God and the land enjoyed peace, are passed over in a single verse, as productive of no events which required a particular detail.'

The whole period is distinguished by a display of extraordinary events, and by the most glaring and miraculous proofs of divine interposition. The history of God's government must necessarily be characterized by the demonstrations of his immediate agency; and the selected instruments of his will may well be expected to exhibit a succession of unprecedented exploits. It should, however, be observed that some of the actions here recorded were justifiable only on the supposition of a divine warrant, which superseded all general rules of conduct. Without this, the deeds of Ehud, and of Jael, might be pronounced censurable for their treachery, however commendable the motives by which they were prompted. In respect, too, to some other incidents, it is obvious that the sacred writer by no means vindicates all that he relates; and that the indiscriminate massacre of the people of Jabesh-Gilead, and the rape of the virgins at Shiloh, stamped as they are with the evident marks of injustice and cruelty, cannot possibly be justified on the principles which the Scriptures elsewhere furnish. In all such cases, and in the recorded characters of God's ministers in general who are brought before us in this book, we perceive the traces of human infirmity; and while we discriminate between the lights and shades that mark the picture, it cannot be questionable what parts of their conduct *we* are called to imitate and what to avoid.

### § 6. *Chronological Arrangement of Contents.*

We have already remarked (§ 3), that the book consists of two distinct portions, of which the latter is to be regarded as a kind of appendix to the former. This portion, which is composed of the last five chapters, embraces the narrative of events that occurred much earlier in the thread of the history than would be inferred from their position in the order of the book. The following tabular synopsis gives the entire contents, according to a just chronological arrangement.

PART I.—*Interregnum after the death of Joshua.*

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. The Israelites destroy several cities of the Canaanites, and make others tributary to them, - - | CHAPTER I. |
| 2. The people reproved by the Angel for not exterminating the Canaanitish nations, - - - - - | II. 1–5. |

3. The character of the people after the death of Joshua, II. 6–10.
4. Introduction of idolatry among them, - - XVII. XVIII
5. History of the Levite of Ephraim; the murder of his concubine by the Benjamites of Gibeah; and the war of the other tribes with them, - - - XIX–XXI.
6. The corruption of religion and manners among the Israelites, and their intermixture with the Canaanitish nations, - - - - - - - II. 11–III. 7.

Part II.—*The History of the Oppressions of the Israelites, and their Deliverances by the Judges.*

1. The servitude of the eastern Israelites under Cushan Rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia, and their deliverance by Othniel, - - - - - - III. 8–11.
2. Servitude of the eastern Israelites under Eglon, the king of Moab, and their deliverance by Ehud, III. 12–30.
3. The western Israelites delivered by Shamgar, - III. 31.
4. Servitude of the northern Israelites under Jabin, king of Canaan, and their deliverance by Deborah and Barak, - - - - - - - - - IV.
   The triumphant song of Deborah and Barak, - - V.
5. The eastern and northern Israelites enslaved by Midian, and their deliverance by Gideon, - - VI–VIII.
6. The usurpation and death of Abimelech, - - - IX.
7. The history of the administration of Tola and Jair, X. 1–6.
8. The oppression of the Israelites by the Philistines and Ammonites, and their deliverance by Jephthah. X. 7–XII. 7.
9. The administration of Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon, XII. 8–15.
10. The oppression of the Israelites by the Philistines, and their deliverance by Samson, - - - XIII–XVI.

## § 7. *Commentators.*

The Commentators upon this book are for the most part the same as those who have undertaken to illustrate the book of Joshua, and whom the reader will find enumerated in the Introduction to that book. Of these the most important are the following:—

Sebastiani Schmidii *Commentarius in Librum Judicum, in quo præter diligentem textus explicationem, præcipuæ questiones et loci communes, quos vocant, ad singula capita et sub finem appendix chronologica adduntur.* Argentorati. 1706. 4to.

Of the elder commentators it would not be easy to point out a superior to Schmid. For accurate analysis, for strict and careful explication of words and phrases, for rigid preciseness in fixing the connexion, and for skill in drawing out his didactic inferences, he is almost unrivalled. He is indeed prone to dwell unduly upon trifles, but this was the fault of the age, rather than of the man. His works are a rich store-house of biblical exposition, and the Commentary on Judges is the most finished of his productions. Walch says of it, in his 'Bibliotheca Theologica,' that it is 'a distinguished work, at the head of all the commentaries which our countrymen have written. The author treats every thing, both words and things, diligently, learnedly, and copiously, and whoever consults this work, can easily dispense with all others.' Buddeus, in his 'Isagoge,' is equally decided in his testimony to the merits of Schmid as a commentator.

Nicolai Serrarii *Judices et Ruth explanati.* Moguntiæ. 1609. Fol.

Victorini Strigelii *Liber Judicum, argumentis et scholiis illustratus.* Lipsiæ. 1575, 1586. 8vo.

Davidis Chytræi *in historiam Judicum populi Israel dilucidus et perspicuus commentarius, cum inserta illius temporis historiarum chronologia.* Francofurti. 1589. 8vo.

Jo. Adami Osiandri *Commentarius in Librum Judicum, exhibens sacrum cum exegesi textum, lectionum et versionum varietatem, conciliatas antilogias, chronologiam, utilium quæstionum solutiones, objectiones cum vindiciis observationes philologicas, et locos communes doctrinales.* Tubingæ. 1682. Fol.

'To be enumerated among the best interpretations of this book.' *Walch.*

Martini Buceri *Commentarius in Librum Judicum.* Parisiis. 1554, 1563. Fol.

Petri Martyri *Commentarius in Librum Judicum.* Tiguri. 1561. Londini. 1564. Fol.

Jacobi Bonfreri *Commentarius in Josuam, Judices, et Ruth.* Parisiis. 1631, 1659. Fol.

Jo. Enr. Grabii *Epistola ad clarissm. vir. Joannem Millium, qua ostenditur, Libri Judicum genuinam* LXX. *interpretum versionem eam esse, quam MS. codex Alexandrinus exhibet; Romanam autem editionem, quod ad dictum librum, ab illa prorsus diversam, atque eandem cum Hesychiano esse.* Oxoniæ. 1707. 4to.

John Coleridge *Miscellaneous Dissertations arising from Judg.* XVII. *and* XVIII. Lond. 1768. 8vo.

Christ. Fred. Schnurrer *R. Tanchum Hierosylumitam ad libros Vet. Testamenti Commentarii Arabici Specimen, una cum annotationibus ad aliquot loca libri Judicum.* Tugingæ. 1791. 4to.

Wern. Carl. Ludw. Ziegler *Bemerkungen über das Buch der Richter aus dem Geist des Heldenalters; nebst Beurtheilung der grieschischen Ver-*

*sionem, und ihrer Abweichung vom Originaltext;* in Auctoris *Theologischen Abhandlugen, erster Band.* Gotting. 1791. 8vo. pp. 262. seqq.

HEINR. EBERH. GOTTL. PAULUS *Blicke in das Buch der Richter, wahrscheinlich den altesten Rest anoder altehebraischen Literatur,* in Auctoris *Theolog. Exeget. Conservatorium,* P. II. (Heidelberg, 1822.) p. 180. seqq.

GOTTL. LUDW. STUDER *das Buch der Richter grammatisch und historisch erklärt.* Bern. 1835. 8vo.

A valuable and well digested work; devoted principally to philological illustration, and, after the German fashion, keeping studiously clear of every practical remark, and of every thing, in fact, beyond the bare letter.

In addition to the above, much valuable matter bearing upon the elucidation of different parts of this book, will be found in 'Lowth's Hebrew Poetry,' 'Green's Poetical Parts of the Old Testament,' 'Herder's Spirit of Hebrew Poetry,' and Prof. Robinson's Interpretation of Judges ch. 5, the Song of Deborah and Barak, in the 'Biblical Repository,' No. III. June, 1831. See also Schnurrer, in 'Eichorn's Repert. vol. ix., p. 54. See a summary of its contents in Actis Eruditt. Leips. An. 1691, p. 167; and an essay by Schnurrer, in Paulus N. Repert. vol. i., p. 117, seqq.—Reland, Dissert. ii., p. 314. 1706. Hottinger, Exercit. Antimor. pp. 105. seqq. Smeg. Or. p. 437. Hist. Or. pp. 40, 120. Disp. Lib. V. T. Supposit., No. I.—Exeg. Handb. A. T. vol. iii., p. 18. seqq.

# THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

## CHAPTER I.

NOW after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel [a] asked the LORD, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first to fight against them?

2 And the LORD said, [b] Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand.

[a] Numb. 27. 21. ch. 20. 18.

[b] Gen. 49. 8.

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## CHAPTER I.

1. *After the death of Joshua.* How long after we have no means of determining; probably not long, for Othniel, the first judge after Joshua's decease, had been his contemporary, and was the son-in-law of Caleb.——¶ *Asked the Lord.* The original phrase is the usual one for consulting the oracle, or inquiring by the ministry of the high-priest, and through the medium of the Urim and Thummim, the will of Jehovah as to the great matters of duty and policy. As we read of no particular person, who succeeded Joshua as commander-in-chief of the Israelites, it is probable that every tribe was governed by one or more of its elders for a number of years, and that in their wars with the Canaanites they also were their military leaders. As the people were now becoming more numerous and capable of occupying a larger extent of territory, they deemed it expedient to renew the war, but having no single head to take the lead in the enterprise, they very properly sought direction from above as to the manner in which the war should be conducted. It will be observed that they do not inquire what individual should be chosen as successor to Joshua and commander of the forces, but which of the *tribes* shall take the precedency in the expedition. Whether each tribe was ambitious of the honor or fearful of the danger of being first, it is not possible to determine, but by common consent it was resolved to refer the matter to God, the proper arbiter in every doubtful case. Happy is it for us that we have the same infallible source of guidance to which to apply in all our perplexities.——¶ *Who shall go up for us?* The common term for a military expedition. See Is. 7. 1; Jer. 50. 3. The phrase 'for us' puts the 'going up' in relation to the whole body of the people. The success of whatever tribe took the lead would be an earnest and assurance of the success of the rest in obtaining complete possession of their respective allotments.

2. *Judah shall go up.* That is the tribe of Judah, not a person of this name. So in v. 3, Simeon stands for the tribe of Simeon, and so also generally in the sequel. The precedency was given to Judah, because it was the most numerous, powerful,

3 And Judah said unto Simeon his brother, Come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and [c] I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him.

4 And Judah went up, and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand: and they slew of them in [d] Bezek ten thousand men.

5 And they found Adoni-bezek in Bezek: and they fought

[c] ver. 17.

[d] 1 Sam. 11. 8.

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and valiant of all the tribes, and that which the Lord designed should possess the pre-eminence in all respects, as being the one from which the Messiah was to spring, and for that reason crowned with the 'excellency of dignity' above all its fellows. Judah therefore must lead in this perilous enterprise; for God not only appoints service according to the strength and ability he has given, but 'would also have the burden of honor and the burden of labor go together.' Those who have the precedency in rank, reputation, or influence, should always be disposed to go before others in every good work, undismayed by danger, difficulty, or obloquy, that they may encourage others by their example.——¶ *I have delivered the land into his hand.* Have determined that he shall subdue it. Not the whole land, but the land or district destined for his inheritance. This God has so firmly purposed to deliver into his hand that it might be considered as already done, and such assurance of victory would naturally give courage for the contest.

3. *Judah said unto Simeon—come up with me*, &c. This proposition was made to Simeon because these tribes being descended, by their progenitors, from the same father and mother, Jacob and Leah, were brethren in the strictest sense, and because also the lot of Simeon fell within that of Judah. This laid a natural ground for their union and co-operation in the enterprise. 'Observe here that the strongest should not despise but desire the assistance even of those that are weaker. It becomes Israelites to help one another against Canaanites; and all Christians, even those of different tribes, to strengthen one another's hands against the common interests of Satan's kingdom.' *Henry.* Caleb was probably commander in this war.

4. *The Lord delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites.* Or, Heb. 'the Canaanite, *even* the Perizzite.' It is not clear that distinct tribes are intended.——¶ *They slew of them in Bezek*, &c. That is, in the city and the adjacent territory. This city is supposed to have been in the tribe of Judah, though there was another lying to the south of Beth-shean (Scythopolis) seven miles from Sichem, where Saul reviewed his army before marching against Jabesh-Gilead. This verse is to be considered merely as a brief compend of the narrative which is more fully expanded in v. 5.–7. No feature of the historical style of the Scriptures is more common than this.

5. *And they found Adoni-bezek.* That is, 'lord or king of Bezek;' probably the common title of the kings of that place. The original

against him, and they slew the Canaanites and the Perizzites.

6 But Adoni-bezek fled; and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes.

7 And Adoni-bezek said, Three-score and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered *their meat* under my table; [e]as I have done, so

[e] Lev. 24. 19. 1 Sam. 15. 33. Jam. 2. 13.

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word מצא *mâtzâ*, *found*, is sometimes used to denote *a hostile encounter; to attack*, *to surprise*, and probably has that sense here. The first word of this verse, 'and,' would be better rendered 'for' in accordance with the remark made above respecting the drift of v. 5-7.

6. *Cut off his thumbs and his great toes.* Heb. 'the thumbs of his hands and of his feet.' Either by express direction or secret impulse from God, who thus purposed to 'mete to him the measure he had meted to others.' 'The Hindoos call the thumb the *revia-viril*, the great finger of the hand, and the large toe is named the great finger of the foot. This punishment was exceedingly common in ancient times, and was inflicted principally on those who had committed some flagrant offence with their hands and their feet. Thus, those convicted of forgery, or numerous thefts, had their thumbs cut off. The practice is abolished, but its memory will remain, as it is now one of the scare-crows of the nursery and domestic life: 'If you steal any more, I will cut off your thumbs.' 'Let me find out the thief, and I will soon have his thumbs'—*Roberts*. The loss of the thumbs would disable them from drawing the bow or handling to advantage the sword or the spear, and so would in effect utterly incapacitate them for war. 'As to the loss of the great toes, independently of the inconvenience occasioned in the act of running or walking, the disabling effect to an Oriental is infinitely greater than to an European. The feet and toes are much employed in all the handicraft operations throughout the East, and in many cases the loss of the great toes would completely disqualify a man from earning his subsistence. Besides the many little active operations which they are tutored to execute, the artisans, as they work with their hands, seated on the ground, hold fast and manage all their work with their feet and toes, in which the great toes have a very prominent duty to perform. Ward, in his 'View of the Hindoos,' has fully shown to what excellent uses the toes are applied in India. 'They are second-hand fingers; they are called feet-fingers in Bengalee. In his own house a Hindoo makes use of them to fasten a clog to his feet by means of a button, which slips between the two middle toes. The tailor, if he does not thread his needle, certainly twists his thread with them. The cook holds his knife with his toes while he cuts fish, vegetables, &c. The joiner, the weaver, &c., could not do without them, and almost every native has twenty different uses for his toes.'—*Pict. Bible.*

7. *Three-score and ten kings*, &c. Not perhaps all at one time, but first and last, during his whole reign. It would seem that wasting civil wars had very much prevailed among the

God hath requited me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died.

8 (Now [f] the children of Judah had fought against Jerusalem,

Canaanites previous to the arrival of the Israelites, and this circumstance probably tended to facilitate their conquests. 'Judah,' says Lightfoot, 'in conquering Adoni-bezek did in effect conquer seventy kings.' In the case of this cruel tyrant we cannot fail to perceive the uncertainty of human greatness. The mighty potentate is here reduced to the condition of a prisoner, to the very extremity of meanness and disgrace; showing that pre-eminence in station often leads only to a sad pre-eminence in misery and distress. 'Let not the highest be proud, nor the strongest secure, for they know not how low they may be brought before they die.'—*Henry.*——¶ *As I have done, so God hath requited me.* A striking acknowledgment, extorted from a guilty conscience, of the retributive justice of Heaven. 'When God's judgments awaken the conscience we shall own his righteousness, and stand self-condemned before him.'—*Haweis.* What pretences he had for warring against these kings, we know not; but thus to insult over the misfortunes of the vanquished, to maim their persons, and compel them, like dogs, to gather up the crumbs from under his table, argued a degree of cruelty which one could scarcely have conceived to exist in a rational being. As the personal injuries he had inflicted would of course disable them from harming him as long as they were kept in bondage, thus to sport himself in their miseries, was a conduct of pure gratuitous cruelty, and could have proceeded only from the most barbarous and brutal dispositions. But we have cause to be humbled for human nature that such propensities still adhere to it. This is evident from the pleasure which children often take in torturing insects and animals, and in vexing and tyrannizing over those who are weaker than themselves—a disposition which in after life displays itself in a fondness for despotic sway, in a vindictive spirit, and in a career of ruthless ambition. But God is known by the judgments that he executeth, and this cruel Canaanite was in his turn made to feel the anguish which he had so wantonly inflicted upon others. The Israelites were led to deal with him on the principle of their own law of retaliation, 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,' &c.; although, as it would have been inconsistent with those gracious affections which, as the Lord's chosen people, they were bound to exercise, they did not reduce him to the same ignominy or insult over him with the same arrogance that he had shown towards others. Thus it is that God sometimes makes men's punishments to correspond with their crimes; and in this case, notwithstanding all the feelings of humanity, we cannot but acquiesce in the judgment that befel him, or help being conscious of a secret satisfaction that the same evils he had so cruelly inflicted upon others should be brought home to himself.

8. *Had fought against Jerusalem and had taken it.* This event of

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[f] See Josh. 15. 63.

and had taken it, and smitten it with the edge of the sword, and set the city on fire.)

9 [g]And afterward the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites that dwelt in the mountain, and in the south, and in the valley.

10 And Judah went against the Canaanites that dwelt in Hebron: (now the name of Hebron before *was* [h]Kirjath-arba:) and they slew Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai.

11 [i]And from thence he went against the inhabitants of Debir; and the name of Debir before *was* Kirjath-sepher:

12 [k]And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife.

prior occurrence is mentioned here to intimate how it happened that they were able to convey the captive king to Jerusalem. It was because they had before taken that city, and it was now in their possession. The reason of removing him thither was perhaps to make him a more public spectacle of the just judgments of God against barbarous and bloodthirsty tyrants. But though the city is said to have been taken, yet the hill of Zion, as appears from the subsequent history, was still held by the Jebusites till the time of David. ——¶ *Set the city on fire.* Heb. העיר שלחו באש *hâir shillehu bâësh, cast the city into the fire;* an inverted phraseology, peculiar to the Hebrew. Thus Ps. 74. 7, 'They have cast fire into the sanctuary;' Heb. 'they have cast thy sanctuary into the fire.' Joel, 3.-18, 'The hills shall flow with milk;' Heb. 'milk shall flow with hills.' This burning the city or a part of it, was probably in token of their detestation of the idolatry which had been practised there.

9. *Went down to fight,* &c. That is, descended to the hill-country lying south of Jerusalem.

10. *And Judah went down against the Canaanites,* &c. That is, under the conduct of Caleb, as we learn from Josh. 15. 14-19, where substantially the same account with the present occurs. How this has happened, whether the writer of Judges took this narrative from Joshua, or the writer of Joshua inserted his from Judges, it is impossible to determine. That both accounts relate the same events there can be no doubt, but whether those events occurred before or after the death of Joshua, is a point which we despair of ever having satisfactorily settled. As the discussion of the question would encumber our pages with matter of little profit to the general reader, we waive it entirely without offering an opinion.——¶ *Slew Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai.* In the parallel passage, Josh. 15. 14, Caleb is said merely to have 'driven out' these sons of Anak. The probability is, that the words before us give the true sense, and that they were actually *slain.* An enemy driven out is not necessarily understood to be slain, but whoever is slain is virtually driven out, by being expelled from among the living.

11—15. See on Josh. 15. 15-19.

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[g] Josh. 10. 36. and 11. 21. and 15. 13.

[h] Josh. 14. 15. and 15. 13, 14. [i] Josh. 15. 15. [k] Josh. 15. 16, 17.

13 And Othniel the son of Kenaz, [l]Caleb's younger brother, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife.

14 [m]And it came to pass, when she came *to him*, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted from off *her* ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wilt thou?

15 And she said unto him, [n]Give me a blessing: for thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water. And Caleb gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs.

16 [o]And the children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up out [p]of the city of palm-trees with the children of Judah into the wilderness of Judah, which *lieth* in the south of [q]Arad; [r]and they went and dwelt among the people.

17 [s]And Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they slew the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed

[l] ch. 3. 9. [m] Josh. 15. 18, 19. [n] Gen. 33. 11.

[o] ch. 4. 11, 17. 1 Sam. 15. 6. 1 Chron. 2. 55. Jer. 35. 2. [p] Deut. 34. 3. [q] Numb. 21. 1. [r] Numb. 10. 32. [s] ver. 3.

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16. *The children of the Kenite, Moses' father in-law.* That is, of Jethro; but why he is called the Kenite it is not easy to say. The probability is, that he inhabited the country occupied by a people of this name, Num. 24. 21. 22, and on this account in process of time came to be distinguished by the same appellation. Whether Jethro himself accompanied Israel into Canaan, according to Moses' invitation, Num. 10. 32, is not clear, but that his posterity did is certain. After their arrival, they at first pitched their tents near Jericho, called also 'the city of Palm trees,' which lay in the lot of Benjamin, and here remained during the lifetime of Joshua. After his death, for reasons now unknown, they united with the tribe of Judah, and went with them to attack Arad. After the conquest of that country, the Kenites established themselves there and remained in it mingled with the Amalekites, and leading a quiet life remote from public affairs, till the days of Saul. When this king received a commandment from God to destroy the Amalekites, he sent a message to the Kenites to depart from among them, as God would not destroy them with that devoted people. From them descended Hemath, the father of the house of Rechab, of whom we have so interesting an account, Jerem. 35.——¶ *Arad.* Of this place see on Num. 21. 1.——¶ *And they went and dwelt*, &c. That is, the greatest part of them. Some few families were dispersed in other places, as we find the tent of Jael, who was of this stock, far to the north, in the tribe of Naphtali, when Sisera took shelter there, ch. 4. 17.——¶ *Among the people.* Heb. את העם *eth hâam, that people;* viz. the children of Judah resident there. 'They who willingly share with God's Israel in their sufferings in the wilderness, shall share also with them in the inheritance in glory.'—*Haweis.*

17. *And Judah went with Simeon*, &c. According to previous compact, v. 3. The thread of the narrative which had been interrupted for the purpose of introducing the foregoing account of Caleb and Othniel,

it. And the name of the city was called [t] Hormah.

18 Also Judah took [u] Gaza with the coast thereof, and Askelon with the coast thereof, and Ekron with the coast thereof.

19 And [x] the LORD was with Judah; and he drave out *the inhabitants of* the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had [y] chariots of iron.

[t] Num. 21. 3. Josh. 19. 4. [u] Josh. 11. 22.

[x] ver. 2. 2 Kings 18. 7. [y] Josh. 17. 16, 18.

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is here resumed.——¶ *Slew the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath.* A valley called Zephathah, is mentioned 2 Chron. 14. 19, as lying near Maresha in the southern section of Judah, where Asa gained a signal victory over the Ethiopian army. This is probably the same place. It was now destroyed in pursuance of a vow taken by Israel before the death of Moses, Num. 21. 1–3, and which for some reason they had delayed to perform till this time. This seems likely from the fact that the same name, 'Hormath,' importing *utter destruction*, is there also bestowed upon the devoted region, and we can otherwise see no particular reason for making Zephath an anathema on this occasion. Arad appears not to have been so much the name of a city, as of a tract of country embracing a number of cities, of which perhaps Zephath was the principal.

18. *Took Gaza with the coast thereof.* With the adjoining territory thereof; and so in what follows. Having conquered the south, they turned their arms towards the Philistines' country in the west. These cities it is said they 'took,' but it is not said that they slew the inhabitants, as they ought to have done. They probably contented themselves with making them tributary, and as a consequence of their ill-judged lenity, they afterwards recovered strength, expelled their invaders, and remained for ages an almost incessant source of annoyance and vexation to the Israelites.

19. *Drave out* the inhabitants of *the mountain.* Or, Heb. ירש את ההר *yoresh eth hâhâr, possessed the mountain.* The idea of the original however is, *possessing in consequence of a previous expulsion.* If the former sense of 'driving out' be retained, mountain, i. e. the mountainous region, is of course used for mountaineers, or the inhabitants of the mountain, as the name of a country or city often stands for its occupants. In the parallel member of the sentence immediately following, the word 'inhabitants' is expressed.——¶ *But could not drive out*, &c. That is, Judah could not. The reason why they could not was their unbelief. Had they duly confided in omnipotence, the chariots of iron would have been no more of an obstacle to them than chariots of straw. But although on a former occasion, Josh. 11. 4–9, they had seen how complete was the victory which Joshua, relying upon God, had obtained over these engines of war, yet now they weakly suffer their fears to prevail over their faith, and instead of trusting God under apparent disadvantages, they meanly withdraw their forces, when one bold stroke would have completed their victories. So with believers, when they view outward difficulties with the eye of

20 [z] And they gave Hebron unto Caleb, as Moses said: and he expelled thence the three sons of Anak.

21 [a] And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day.

22 And the house of Joseph, they also went up against Bethel: [b] and the LORD *was* with them.

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[z] Num. 14. 24. Deut. 1. 36. Josh. 14. 9, 13, and 15. 13, 14. [a] See Josh. 15. 63, and 18. 28.

[b] ver. 19.

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sense, and forget the almighty power of God; their hearts grow discouraged, their expectations feeble, and their attempts timid and wavering; and then no wonder they do not prosper, for in proportion to our faith will be our vigor, zeal, and success. The Chal. paraphrast renders the verse; 'And the Word of Jehovah was in the support of the house of Judah, and they extirpated the inhabitants of the mountains; but afterwards, *when they sinned*, they were not able to extirpate the inhabitants of the plain country, because they had chariots of iron.'

20. *And they gave Hebron unto Caleb*, &c. We have little doubt that the true design of inserting this verse in this connexion is lost sight of, by the present mode of rendering. Let the verb be translated in the pluperfect tense, 'had given,' and the drift is obvious. It is as if the writer had said, 'Although they had some time before given Hebron to Caleb, and he had expelled thence the three gigantic sons of Anak, who were deemed the most formidable and invincible of all the old inhabitants of Canaan, and though his success ought to have been regarded as a pledge and earnest of their own, let the opposing power have been what it might, yet notwithstanding this precedent, they ignobly failed in the achievement of a conquest equally easy.' Understood in this sense, the words, instead of being an unmeaning repetition of an incident frequently mentioned before, are in fact a tacit but severe rebuke of the cowardice and pusillanimity of the nation.

21. *The children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites.* Jerusalem was situated partly in the tribe of Judah, and partly in that of Benjamin; the northern part belonging to the latter tribe, the southern to the former. This will account for the fact, that what is here said of Benjamin, is, in Josh. 15 63, said of Judah. It was owing to the most culpable remissness on the part of the tribe of Benjamin that these Jebusites were not expelled from their strong-hold. As the Jebusites dwelt in Jerusalem till the days of David, and the author of this book states them to have been in possession of Jerusalem when he wrote, therefore this book was certainly written *before* the reign of David, or before the date of his capture of that part of the city.

22. *The house of Joseph—went up.* That is, the tribe of Ephraim, as appears from the contrary affirmation respecting Manasseh.——¶ *The Lord was with them.* Another mode of saying that they were eminently successful in the expedition. The pre-

23 And the house of Joseph [c] sent to descry Beth-el. Now the name of the city before *was* [d] Luz.

24 And the spies saw a man come forth out of the city, and they said unto him, Show us, we pray thee, the entrance into the city, and [e] we will show thee mercy.

25 And when he showed them the entrance into the city, they smote the city with the edge of the sword: but they let go the man and all his family.

sence of God with us in our conflicts is the strongest assurance of triumph. Chal. 'The Word of the Lord was their Helper;' i. e. Christ.

23. *Sent to descry Bethel.* Heb. 'sent to descry, or explore in Bethel.' That is, in the region or tract immediately surrounding the city. The primary sense of the original is *to make a circuit*, especially with a view to spy, explore, or reconnoitre. From this the native import of the word, and from the term made use of in the next verse to designate the persons in question, there is little doubt that the language implies the *constant employment* of a number of persons in this service, their being appointed *to keep steadily on the watch.* We cannot otherwise account for the use of the particle 'in.'——¶ *Luz.* See on Gen. 28. 19.

24. *And the spies saw a man*, &c. Heb. השמרים *hashshomerim*, *the guards*, *the watchmen;* implying that there was a *stationary watch* placed in the vicinity of the city to observe its movements, to note if any came out, and to apprehend them. ——¶ *Show us—the entrance into the city.* Not the gate, the common avenue, which there could be no difficulty in finding, but some weak point, where an entrance could be effected with least danger and difficulty.——¶ *We will show thee mercy.* This confirms the opinion that the Israelites might spare the lives of such Canaanites as either submitted to become bondmen and renounced idolatry, or emigrated into other regions, as was the case with this individual and his family. See on Josh. 11. 19.

25. *And when he showed them the entrance*, &c. We do not feel prepared with Adam Clarke to pronounce the conduct of this man 'execrable, taken in whatever light we choose,' without knowing more of the real motives by which he was actuated in giving the intelligence he did. It is possible he might have done it from the conviction that 'the Lord was with them,' and that by his gift the land was theirs of right, and then the same reasons which justified Rahab in entertaining those whom she knew to be the enemies of her country, but the friends of God, would justify him. Yet the fact that he did not, when set at liberty, like Rahab, unite his interests with the worshippers of Jehovah, but retired to his countrymen in another region, argues against him, and leads us rather to infer, that he was influenced more by fear than by faith in acting the part of an informer. In that case we are not called to pass judgment on his conduct at all, but leave him in the hands of Him who knows bet-

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[c] Josh. 2. 1, and 7. 2. ch. 18. 2. [d] Gen. 28. 19.

[e] Josh. 2. 12, 14.

26 And the man went into the land of the Hittites, and built a city, and called the name thereof Luz: which *is* the name thereof unto this day.

27 ¶ Neither did Manasseh drive out *the inhabitants of* Beth-shean and her towns, nor Taanach and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Ibleam and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns; but the Canaanites would dwell in that land.

28 And it came to pass when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out.

29 ¶ [g]Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them.

30 ¶ Neither did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, nor the [h]inhabitants of Nahalol; but the Canaanites dwelt among them, and became tributaries.

31 ¶ [i]Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho, nor the inhabitants of Zidon, nor of Ahlab, nor of Achzib, nor of Helbah, nor of Aphik, nor of Rehob:

f Josh. 17. 11, 12, 13.

g Josh. 16. 10. 1 Kings 9. 16. h Josh. 19. 15. i Josh. 19. 24–30.

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ter than we do how to discriminate between the claims of allegiance to one's country and of the principle of self-preservation.

26. *Went into the land of the Hittites.* Probably some place without the bounds of the promised land, perhaps in Arabia, where Josephus mentions a city called *Lussa* (Luz.) Antiq. B. 14. ch. 2. The man himself was perhaps a Hittite, and to perpetuate the name of his city, he called the new one, which he now founded, after the ancient name of Bethel.

27. *Neither did Manasseh drive out.* That is, *possess by dispossessing*, the true sense of the original, as already remarked, v. 19. On the situation of Beth-shean, and the other towns recited here, see on Josh. 17. 11.——¶ *And her towns.* Heb. בנותיה *benothēhâ*, *her daughters*, i. e. her dependent places, her adjacent villages.——¶ *The Canaanites would dwell in that land.* On this remarkable and very expressive phraseology, see on Josh. 17. 12.

28. *When Israel was strong.* &c. The fact of their ability aggravated the crime of their neglect, and it is probably with a view to intimate this, that the circumstance of their becoming strong is mentioned. Thus their sin prepared its own punishment, and the love of present ease became the source of perpetual disquiet in after times. Thus shall *we* ever fare by neglecting present opportunities, through sinful self-indulgence and failing to bring under our enemies when they are in our power. See on Josh. 17. 13.

29. *The Canaanites dwelt among them.* Intimating, perhaps, that they allowed them a quiet settlement and indulged them in the privileges of an unconquered people, not even making them tributary.

32. *The Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites.* As it is not usual to say of a larger number that it dwells

32 But the Asherites [k] dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: for they did not drive them out.

33 [l] Neither did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh, nor the inhabitants of Beth-anath; but he [m] dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: nevertheless, the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and of Beth-anath [n] became tributaries unto them.

34 And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain: for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley:

35 But the Amorites would dwell in mount Heres [o] in Aijalon, and Shaalbim: yet the hand of the house of Joseph prevailed, so that they became tributaries.

36 And the coast of the Amorites *was* [p] from the going up to Akrabbim, from the rock, and upward

## CHAPTER II.

AND an angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal [a] to

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[k] Ps. 106. 34, 35. [l] Josh. 19. 38. [m] ver. 32. [n] ver. 30.

[o] Josh. 19. 42. [p] Num. 34. 4. Josh. 15. 3. [a] ver. 5.

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*among* a smaller, the inference in regard to Asher and Naphtali is, that they expelled comparatively but *few* of the Canaanites, leaving them in fact a *majority* of the population. With most of the other tribes, the case appears, for a considerable time at least, to have been different. See on ch. 3. 5.

34. *The Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain.* That is, into the mountainous parts of their lot.——¶ *Would not suffer them to come down to the valley.* To the lower country, or the plains, probably by reason of their iron chariots.

35. *Would dwell in mount Heres,* &c. Not content with the possession of the valleys, they in three instances at least made themselves for a while masters of the mountains, but this portion of them, by the seasonable assistance of the descendants of Joseph, were checked in their progress, confined within narrower limits, and compelled to pay tribute. But the Danites, as a whole, were so pressed and straitened by these Amoritish hordes, that they were finally induced to enlarge their possessions by seeking new quarters in a remote part of the land, ch. 18. 1; Josh. 19. 47.

36. *And the coast of the Amorites was,* &c. That is, the territory, the country occupied. The scope of this verse seems to be to intimate that it was not surprising that the Amorites were such a formidable enemy to Israel, when it is considered that they were a powerful and numerous race, inhabiting a territory that extended from the southern limits of Canaan (Akrabbim, Josh. 15. 3), and even from beyond the city of the Rock (Petra), northwest-ward as far as to Mount Heres.

## CHAPTER II.

1. *An angel of the Lord.* As the word 'angel,' in its primary import, is a term of office equivalent to *messenger*, the Jews for the most part are of the opinion that it here de-

Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I sware unto your fathers; and

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notes *a prophet* sent by God as a messenger, and that messenger they suppose to have been Phinehas, the high-priest, who was commissioned on this occasion to deliver the ensuing solemn reproof to Israel. This is indeed possible, but the more probable opinion we take to be, that it was neither a human prophet nor a created angel, but the Son of God himself, he who is so frequently styled, in the Scriptures, the 'Angel of the covenant.' The evidence of this is found in what he immediately goes on to say of himself;—'I made you to go up out of Egypt,' &c. Who but Jehovah himself could or would adopt such language as this? It was not a creature that brought the Israelites out of Egypt; but Jehovah. It was not a creature that made a covenant with them; but Jehovah. It was not a creature to whom they were accountable for their disobedience, and whose displeasure they had so much reason to dread; but Jehovah. As to the circumstance of his being said to 'come up' from Gilgal, which is supposed to militate against this interpretation, it rather confirms it; for it was in Gilgal, near to Jericho, that this same divine person had appeared to Joshua as an armed warrior. That *he* was Jehovah cannot be doubted, because he suffered Joshua to worship him, and even commanded him to put off his shoes from his feet, inasmuch as the ground on which he stood was, by reason of *his* presence, rendered holy. In his conversation with Joshua he had called himself the 'Captain of the Lord's host,' and therefore there was a particular propriety in his appearing now to the people, to inquire, Why they had not carried his orders into effect? and to threaten them that he would fight for them no longer. Besides, at Gilgal the people had renewed the ordinance of circumcision and the passover, in which they had consecrated themselves to God afresh, and engaged to serve him as his redeemed people. In coming therefore as from Gilgal, the Angel upbraided them with their base ingratitude, reminded them of their solemn engagements, and humbled them the more for their violation of them.——¶ *To Bochim.* Heb. 'the weepers.' Gr. κλαυθμωνες, *bewailings;* so called by anticipation from the weeping and lamentation, v. 8, that took place there. Where Bochim was situated we are not elsewhere informed, and the probability is, that the place was in reality no other than Shiloh, where the people were now assembled, v. 4, on one of their solemn festivals; for it appears, v. 5, that the sacrifices were offered on the occasion, and we know that, as a general rule, sacrifices were not offered except where the tabernacle and altar were fixed, and this, at the present time was at Shiloh. As to the time when the events recorded, v. 1–11, took place, it was doubtless subsequent to the death of Joshua, though the precise date of it cannot now be ascertained. If in Joshua's time they had been guilty of the gross delinquency here laid to their charge, he would hardly have failed to reprove them for it, or have said, Josh. 23. 8, that they had 'cleav-

[b] I said, I will never break my covenant with you.

2 And [c] ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; [d] ye shall throw down their altars: [e] but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this?

3 Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be [f] *as thorns* in your sides, and [g] their gods shall be a [h] snare unto you.

4 And it came to pass, when the angel of the Lord spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept

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[b] Gen. 17. 7. [c] Deut. 7. 2. [d] Deut. 12. 3. [e] ver. 20. Ps. 106. 34.

[f] Josh. 23. 13. [g] ch. 3. 6. [h] Exod. 23. 33, and 34. 12. Deut. 7. 16. Ps. 106. 36.

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ed unto the Lord their God unto that day.' The reason for the mention of Joshua's dismission of the people being inserted in this immediate connection, will be given in our remarks on v. 6.——¶ *I said, I will never break my covenant.* Provided you are true and faithful to yours. The first breach of covenant shall never be laid to my charge.

2. *Ye shall make no league*, &c. The *letter* of this passage is too plain to need remark, but the *spirit* of it in its application to the Christian Israel, merits our most serious regard. It teaches the danger of indecision and supineness in prosecuting our Christian warfare. The command to every follower of Christ is, to make no league with our spiritual enemies. Our corrupt affections and lusts are not to be spared. It is not sufficient to make them pay tribute; we must crucify and slay them; we must show them no mercy; our hatred of them must be irreconcileable and incessant.

3. *Wherefore I also said.* I inwardly purposed and resolved. On this sense of the word 'say,' see on ch. 22. 33. Or with several of the versions, it may be rendered in the present, 'I say, I declare.'——¶ As thorns *in your sides.* See Num. 33. 55; Josh. 23. 13.——¶ *Their gods shall be a snare unto you.* Chald. 'their abominations.' They will prove an enticement to you, to entangle you in idolatry and so effect your ruin.

4. *The people lifted up their voice and wept.* For a time, at least, they were deeply affected with a sense of their transgressions. They lifted up their voice both in confession of sin and deprecation of punishment. And have *we* not equal occasion to weep, whether we consider *our* sin or our punishment? Is not the sparing of inveterate lusts as wicked as sparing the devoted Canaanites? Does it not betray an equal want of reverence for God, of love to his name, of zeal for his honor? Let us hear then the voice that proclaims our duty; 'Be afflicted and mourn and weep, let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into heaviness; humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, and he shall lift you up.' But while we imitate the humiliation of the Israelites on this occasion, let us be careful to bring forth fruits more meet for repentance than did they in their subsequent conduct. For though they now showed signs of deep abasement and sorrow of spirit, yet we do

5 And they called the name of that place Bochim: and they sacrificed there unto the LORD.

6 ¶ And when [i] Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land.

7 [k] And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel.

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[i] Josh. 22. 6, and 24. 28. [k] Josh. 24. 31.

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not find, from the ensuing history, that any general or permanent reformation took place; though they now relented, they soon relapsed, and involved themselves afresh and still more deeply in the guilt of defection and idolatry. 'Many are melted under the word, that harden again before they are cast in a new mould.' *Henry.*

5. *They sacrificed there unto the Lord.* They had recourse to the blood of sprinkling for the remission of their sin. Though their weeping was very general and very bitter, so much so as to give a name to the place, yet they did not hope to pacify their offended God with tears. They knew that an atonement was necessary, and they therefore sought him in his appointed way. Would that *we* might learn from them! Humiliation is *necessary*, but not *sufficient.* Tears, even if they were to flow in rivers, could never wash away sin. The blood of atonement is indispensable, without which there is no remission. Nor should the fact be lost sight of here, that the sin laid to the charge of Israel was not of *commission*, but of *omission;* not some flagrant enormity, but a lukewarmness and neglect of duty. Yet they saw their need of a sacrifice to atone for *that.* In like manner, though we should have no guilt imputed to us but that of omission and defect, yet must we apply to the blood of sprinkling, and seek for pardon through that one sacrifice offered for us upon the cross.

6. *When Joshua had let the people go.* This passage, v. 6–9, has already occurred in nearly the same words in Josh. 24. 29–31. It seems to be repeated here as a suitable preliminary to the ensuing account of their degeneracy and apostasy. The angel had foretold that the Canaanites and their idols would be a snare to Israel. The writer is now about to show that this prediction was actually fulfilled, and in order to that he turns back and takes a brief retrospect of some previous incidents in their history which, by contrast, would set the enormity of their transgressions in a still more striking point of view. This is according to the common usage of the sacred writers, who, in their narrations, go more by the *relation* of events to each other, than by their strict *chronological order.* After being so happily fixed in their several inheritances and having commenced their settlement in Canaan under such favorable auspices, it greatly aggravated their sin, that they should afterwards have fallen away from God, and so grievously disappointed the promise which their fair beginnings held out.

7. *All the days of the elders that outlived Joshua.* Heb. 'that prolonged their days after Joshua.' As these elders might some of them

8 And [l]Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, *being* an hundred and ten years old.

9 [m]And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in [n]Timnath-heres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash.

10 And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which [o]knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

11 ¶ And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim:

12 And they [p]forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed [q]other gods, of the gods of the people that *were* round about

[l] Josh. 24. 29. [m] Josh. 24. 30. [n] Josh. 19. 50, and 24. 30. [o] Exod 5. 2. 1 Sam. 2. 12. 1 Chron. 28. 9. Jer. 9. 3, and 22. 16. Gal. 4. 8. 2 Thess. 1. 8. Tit. 1. 16.

[p] Deut. 31. 16. [q] Deut. 6. 14.

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have lived several years after Joshua's decease, this term should be deducted from the whole period of Israel's idolatries recorded in this book.

9. *Buried him—in Timnath-heres.* This place is called, in Josh. 24. 30, 'Timnath-*serah*.' By transposing the letters of the last word, it becomes, as here, 'Heres,' which signifies *the sun*, and it is not improbable, as the Jews imagine, that it was so called by reason of some memorial, connected with his sepulchre, of the sun's miraculously standing still at his command.

10. *Which knew not the Lord.* Had no practical or experimental knowledge of him; no deep or lively impression of his goodness; no affectionate, grateful, or devout sense of the wondrous manifestations of his power in their behalf. See on Ex. 1. 8.

11. *Served Baalim.* This word, the plural of 'Baal,' signifies *lords*. Their false gods the Canaanites considered as *supernatural rulers* or *governors*, each having his peculiar district and office. But when they wished to express a particular 'Baal,' or *lord*, they usually added some distinctive epithet, as Baal-*zephon*, Baal-*peor*, Baal-*zebub*, &c. The pl. is here used to intimate that these imaginary deities were various, and that the worship of the Israelites, like that of the Canaanites, was not confined to any one of them. Lords many and gods many had dominion over them. From this verse onwards to the end of the chapter, the writer's drift seems to be to give in brief terms a summary or compend of the whole book. It is a general and condensed statement of the leading features of the history of Israel, during the period of the Judges, which in the ensuing chapters is expanded into the various details of oppression and deliverance which are so briefly touched upon in these verses. This is according to the common usage of the sacred writers, and we have no doubt that the more minute is the reader's inspection of the structure of the book, the more plausible will this view of the subject appear.

12, *And they forsook the Lord God.* Rather, '*for* they forsook,' &c., a mere enlargement in its more mi-them, and [r] bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger.

13 And they forsook the LORD, [s] and served Baal and Ashtaroth.

14 ¶ [t] And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he [u] delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and [x] he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they [y] could not any longer stand before their enemies.

15 Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and [z] as the LORD

[r] Exod 20. 5. [s] ch. 3. 7, and 10. 6. Ps. 106. 36. [t] ch. 3. 8. Ps. 106. 40, 41, 42. [u] 2 Kings 17. 20.

[x] ch. 3. 8, and 4. 2. Ps. 44. 12. Isai. 50. 1. [y] Lev. 26. 37. Josh. 7. 12, 13. [z] Lev. 26 Deut. 28.

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nute particulars of the general fact stated in the preceding verse. Chald. 'they forsook the worship of the Lord God,' as they that forsake the worship of God, do in effect forsake God himself.

13. *Served Baal and Ashtaroth.* Ashtaroth, like Baalim above, is of the plural number, and is probably here used as a general name for all the female deities of these nations, as Baal or Baalim is of the male. The sing. Ashtereth (Astarte) is the name of the Syrian Venus, who was worshipped with the most revolting and abominable rites. It is supposed that the moon was worshipped under this name, as was the sun under that of Baal.

14. *Into the hands of spoilers.* Robbers, marauders, plundering parties of the Canaanites, who committed depredations upon their cattle, flocks, crops, &c. The word *may* also be understood in a still fuller sense as equivalent to *oppressors*, those who captured not their property only, but themselves, reducing them to servitude, or at least compelling them to pay tribute.——¶ *Sold them.* To sell, is to alienate the possession of any thing for a valuable consideration. The term is used in the Scriptures, however, without the annexed idea of an equivalent. God is said to 'sell' his disobedient people, when he delivers them up into the hands of their enemies to be dealt with as they may see fit, when he puts them out of his own hand, as it were, withholds his protection, and has nothing more to do with them as the objects of his peculiar protection. It is a term, therefore, emphatically expressive of the divine displeasure, the most fearful judgment in its consequences that can befal a nation or an individual. Comp. ch. 3. 8, and 4 8; Deut. 32. 30; Ps. 44. 13; Is. 50. 1.

15. *Whithersoever they went out.* Whatsoever they undertook. Heb. 'in every thing to which they went forth.' Not only in their military expeditions against their enemies, but in whatever undertaking they engaged at home, they were still baffled and disappointed, and every thing went against them. The doing of any kind of business is frequently expressed in Hebrew by the phrase, 'going out,' or 'coming in.' Thus, Deut. 28. 6, 'Blessed shalt thou be when thou *comest in*, and blessed shalt thou be when thou *goest out;*' i. e. in all thine undertakings and employments, in the whole course and current of thine affairs. Comp. Ps. 121. 8.——¶ *As the Lord had*

had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed.

16 ¶ Nevertheless [a] the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.

17 And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they [b] went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; *but* they did not so.

18 And when the LORD raised them up judges, then [c] the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: ([d] for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them.)

19 And it came to pass, [e] when the judge was dead, *that* they returned, and corrupted *themselves* more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way.

[a] ch. 3. 9, 10 15. 1 Sam. 12. 11. Acts 13. 20. [b] Exod. 34. 15, 16. Lev. 17. 7.

[c] Josh. 1. 5. [d] See Gen. 6. 6. Deut. 32. 36. Ps. 106. 44, 45. [e] ch. 3. 12, and 4. 1, and 8. 33.

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*said*, &c. Particular reference is had to Lev. 26. 15–17; Deut. 28. 25; where these very judgments are expressly denounced against them in case they should thus apostatize.

16. *The Lord raised up judges.* That is, by the secret prompting and inspiration of his spirit, working upon the hearts of particular individuals, in view of the sufferings and calamities of the people, and inciting them, like Moses in Egypt, to aim at effecting their deliverance. This inward impulse was usually, perhaps always, accompanied by an express call and command to undertake the work, and by some outward designation which testified to the people the divine election; such for the most part as the display of some signal act of heroism, the performance of some marvellous or miraculous exploit, as in the cases of Shamgar, Gideon, Samson, &c. On the import of the word 'judges' in this book, see Introduction.

17. *Would not hearken unto their judges.* Would not obey them.——¶ *But went*, &c. By the covenant entered into at mount Sinai, Ex. 19. 6, the people of Israel were virtually *married* unto God, so that every instance of idolatry was a breach of that solemn compact. The worship of idols was accounted and spoken of as spiritual adultery, and from the nature of the rites accompanying these idolatrous practices, the term was often more than metaphorically proper.

18. *It repented the Lord.* He altered the course of his providence, acted as if he repented. See on Gen 6. 6, 7; Deut. 32. 36.

19. *They ceased not from their own doings.* Heb. 'they let nothing fall from their doings.' They abated, they relaxed nothing of their evil practices.——¶ *Nor from their stubborn way.* Heb. דרכם הקשה *darkâm hakkâshâh, their hard way.* Hard, as proceeding from a hard and per-

20 ¶ [f] And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath [g] transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice;

21 [h] I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died.

22 [i] That through them I may [k] prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep *it*, or not.

23 Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out hastily, neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua.

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[f] ver. 14. [g] Josh. 23. 16. [h] Josh. 23. 13.

[i] ch. 3. 1, 4. [k] Deut. 8. 2, 16, and 13. 3.

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verse heart; hard, in the sense of being *stubbornly persisted in;* and hard or grievous in its consequences. It is the term applied to the obstinate and intractable conduct of Pharaoh.

20. *And the anger of the Lord was kindled*, &c. From this verse to the end of the chapter, the narrative is probably to be considered merely as a repetition in substance of what is affirmed by the Angel, v. 1–3. It is a more full and detailed statement of the *reasons* for the foregoing appearance of the divine messenger, threatening them with the judgments of heaven for their disobedience. Nothing is more common than such transpositions in the order of the inspired record. The *effect* is first mentioned, and the *cause* afterwards.

21. *Will not henceforth drive out*, &c. I will not while you continue in your stubborn way. The promises of God to expel the Canaanites were upon condition of their obedience.

22. *That through them I may prove Israel.* Not for his own satisfaction, but that they themselves might be made better acquainted with the plague of their own hearts, and that the righteous judgments of God might thus approve themselves to the consciences of all who should either experience, or witness, or hear of them. The Most High often orders his providence on the principle of a father or master who distrusts the fidelity of his son or servant, and places them in such circumstances that they may, by their good or evil conduct, justify his suspicions, or give him proofs of their being groundless. It is implied, however, that these nations, in case the Israelites stood not the test, should be not only *trials* or *ordeals* to them, but also *scourges* and *instruments of wrath.* ——¶ *As their fathers did keep it.* That is, those who lived in the days of Joshua, and the elders who overlived him.

23. *Therefore the Lord left*, &c. Or, Heb. 'suffered.' It is not to be understood that there was any *absolute necessity* for this delay in expelling the Canaanites, but as God *foresaw* the remissness of his people in accomplishing this work, he saw fit in his providence to *overrule* it to a wise and useful result. In like manner he overrules the wickedness of all the wicked in the universe, and causes it to redound to the good of the whole and his own glory, in the view of all intelligent creatures.

## CHAPTER III.

NOW these *are* [a] the nations which the LORD left, to prove Israel by them, (*even* as many *of Israel* as had not known all the wars of Canaan;

2 Only that the generations of the children of Israel might know to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof;)

3 *Namely*, [b] five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the Sidonians, and the

[a] ch. 2. 21, 22.

[b] Josh. 13. 3.

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## CHAPTER III.

1. *Now these are the nations*, &c. The nations left to prove the Israelites were the five *lordships* or *satrapies* of the Philistines, who gave them more trouble than any of the rest—particularly in the latter days of the judges—the Sidonians, Canaanites, and the Hivites that dwelt about Mount Lebanon.——¶ *As many—as had not known*, &c. These words and those of the ensuing verse, included together in the parenthesis, however obvious a sense they seem to present to the English reader, are by no means so easy of explication when we turn to the original. The first and perhaps most natural impression as to their meaning is, that they are designed to acquaint us with *another* reason which God had for leaving these nations in the land, beside that of proving Israel, viz. that their posterity might not forget military discipline, but keep themselves habituated to those warlike practices which would be necessary for their protection. This effect would be secured by the constant presence of an enemy, and therefore God left a remnant of the devoted nations to prevent his people growing rusty, if we may so say, in the use of arms. This we are not prepared to term an *erroneous* construction, but quite sure we are that it is an *inadequate* one. The term 'to know,' must in fairness be interpreted according to its usual Scriptural import, which is to have not merely an *intellectual*, but an *experimental* knowledge of any thing. By those therefore who 'had not *known* all the wars of Canaan,' we understand those who had not with confiding faith, with lively zeal, and from a prompt and grateful spirit of obedience, entered into and persevered in those conflicts with the Canaanites which God had enjoined. As they had grossly failed in their duty in this respect, and had not 'known' these wars as they should have done, their children, according to the righteous economy of Providence, were appointed to reap the bitter fruits of their neglect. *They* were to *know* to their cost, to be *taught* by sad experience, the trouble, vexation, and annoyance that should come upon the successive generations descended from those who, by their culpable remissness, had so righteously incurred this afflictive judgment. This we suppose to be the true import of the original, to which no translation can do full justice. But we may learn from it that the neglect of one generation to discharge its appropriate duties, never fails to burden their successors with the penalty of their remissness.

3. *Five lords.* Five lordships, principalities, or *satrapies*, as it is rendered by the Seventy. See on

Hivites that dwelt in mount Lebanon, from mount Baal-hermon unto the entering in of Hamath.

4 [c] And they were to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the LORD, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.

5 ¶ [d] And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites:

6 And [e] they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods.

7 [f] And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgat the LORD their God,

[c] ch. 2. 22. [d] Ps. 106. 35. [e] Exod. 34. 16. Deut. 7. 3. [f] ch. 2. 11.

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Josh. 13. 3.——¶ *All the Canaanites and the Zidonians*, &c. Rather, 'all the Canaanites, even the Zidonians,' &c. That portion of the Canaanites seems to be intended who are otherwise styled Phœnicians, whose capital city was Zidon, so called from Zidon the son of Canaan, Gen. 10. 15, and who were never entirely subdued by the Israelites.——¶ *From mount Baal-Hermon.* A part of Antilibanus, lying near the sources of the Jordan.

4. *And they were to prove Israel.* Heb. 'and they were made to be for a trial or proof of Israel;' expressive not so strictly of the *design* of their being left, which is stated v. 1, as of the *actual event.* The result corresponded with the divine prescience and purposes. 'God in his revealed will had commanded (doomed) the Canaanites to slaughter, yet secretly gives over Israel to a toleration of some Canaanites, for their own punishment. He hath bidden us cleanse our hearts of all our corruptions; yet he will permit some of these thorns still in our sides for exercise, for humiliation. If we could lay violent hands on our sins, our souls should have peace; now our indulgence costs us many stripes and many tears.' *Bp. Hall.*——¶ *To know.* That is, to make known, to afford to themselves and others experimental proof. God himself of course could stand in no need of such a process to ascertain the truth. See on Deut. 8. 2.

5. *Dwelt among the Canaanites.* Evidently implying that, contrary to the command of God, they suffered these nations to remain a majority in point of numbers, as otherwise they could not properly be said to dwell *among them.* See on ch. 1. 32.

6. *Took their daughters—and served their gods.* Chal. 'worshipped their errors (idols).' The cause and the effect brought into immediate connexion, in exact accordance with what had been long before announced, Deut. 7. 3, 4, 'Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods; so will the anger of the Lord be kindled,' &c. 'In such unequal matches there is more reason to fear that the bad will corrupt the good, than to hope the good will reform the bad.' *Henry.*

[g] and served Baalim, and [h] the groves.

8 ¶ Therefore the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he [i] sold them into the hand of [k] Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia: and the children of Israel served Chushan-rishathaim eight years.

9 And when the children of Israel [l] cried unto the Lord, the

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[g] ch. 2. 13. [h] Exod. 34. 13. Deut. 16. 21. ch. 6. 25. [i] ch. 2. 14. [k] Hab. 3. 7.

[l] ver. 15. and ch. 4. 3, and 6. 7, and 10. 10. 1 Sam. 12. 10. Neh. 9. 27. Ps. 22. 5, and 106. 44, and 107. 13. 19.

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7. *Forgat the Lord their God.* 'In complaisance to their new relations, they talked of nothing but Baalim and the groves, so that by degrees they lost the remembrance of the true God; and forgot that there was such a being, and what obligations they lay under to him. In nothing is the corrupt memory of man more treacherous than in this, that it is apt to forget God; because he is out of sight, he is out of mind; and here begins all the wickedness that is in the world; they have 'perverted their way,' for they have 'forgotten the Lord their God.' *Henry.*——¶ *Served Baalim and the groves.* Not the groves themselves, but the grove-gods, the images or idols which were set up in shady groves consecrated to their worship. Gesenius however on the original word אשרות *Asheroth*, contends with much plausibility that it is a proper name closely related to Ashtaroth, and signifies the *statues of Astarte*, the Syrian Venus or goddess of Fortune, one of the most noted of the Phœnician deities. This is confirmed by nearly all the ancient versions. The rendering 'groves' originated with the Greek Septuagint, probably from the fact of their votaries worshipping those images in such retired places. From this source the signification of *groves* has crept into most lexicons and commentaries of modern times.

8. *Sold them into the hand.* Delivered them into the hand. See this phrase explained, ch. 2. 14.——¶ *Chushan-rishathaim.* Rendered by most of the ancient versions *Chushan, the wicked or impious;* properly the *doubly*, i. e. pre-eminently, *wicked.* The grounds of the appellation, supposing this to be correct, it is now impossible to determine.——¶ *Mesopotamia.* Heb. *Aram-Naharaim, Syria of the two rivers*, i. e. the country lying between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, thence called Mesopotamia, which signifies the *midst of rivers.* See on Gen. 24. 10. It is now called Diarbek.——¶ *Served.* This servitude, as applied to the state of subjection to which the Israelites were oftentimes reduced, must be understood with some variation of meaning according to circumstances; but generally it signifies the obligation to pay tribute and make presents to the conqueror. That they were obliged to render personal or military service does not appear from the Scriptures; but that they were sometimes subject to the most severe and cruel treatment is obvious from the whole history. It is very probable, that their subjection to this distant king was more favorable than to the immediately neighboring nations, and even to nations dwelling in the same land with themselves, to which they were afterwards reduced.

9. *When the children of Israel*

Lord [m] raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, *even* [n] Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.

10 And [o] the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war: and the Lord delivered Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed against Chushan-rishathaim.

11 And the land had rest forty years: and Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

[m] ch. 2. 16. [n] ch. 1. 13. [o] See Num. 27. 18. ch. 6. 34, and 11. 29, and 13. 25, and 14. 6, 19. 1 Sam. 11. 6. 2 Chron. 15. 1.

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*cried.* When they uttered fervent prayers coupled with penitent confessions of their faults, as is to be inferred from ch. 10. 10, and 15. 16. ——¶ *Raised up a deliverer.* Heb. 'a savior.' So afterwards, 'who delivered,' Heb. 'and saved;' which is more properly we think to be referred to God than to Othniel. God saved or delivered them *by* Othniel. 'Savior,' in this connection, is but another name for the 'judges,' who were raised up from time to time for the deliverance of Israel. Comp. 2 Kings 13. 5; Neh. 9. 27. The original for 'raised up,' properly signifies *stirred up*, *excited*, *prompted*, in consequence of a special divine influence exerted upon the individual. The phrase is in fact explained by the terms employed in the beginning of the next verse.——¶ *Othniel the son of Kenaz.* Of whom see Josh. 15. 16, and Judg. 1. 13. He had already signalized his valor in the taking of Kirjath-sepher and by his experience in war, and the reputation he had gained with his countrymen, was peculiarly qualified to lead them successfully against their oppressors.

10. *The Spirit of the Lord came upon him.* Heb. 'was, or was made to be, upon him.' A common expression for one's being moved, acted upon, and impelled by supernatural influence to perform some extraordinary exploit, or to take the lead in some great and important enterprise. Chald. 'the spirit of prophecy remained upon him.' The expression implies that he was endowed with singular wisdom, fortitude and valor, adapting him to the work to which he was called.——¶ *He judged Israel.* That is, he not only assumed the office of chief magistrate and entered upon the work of reforming their manners, repressing idolatry, administering justice, and reviving religion, but also, as appears from the ensuing clause, put himself at the head of their forces, and in this capacity, *pleaded* and *avenged* the cause of Israel against their oppressors. Thus the term is employed Ps. 43. 1, '*Judge* me, O, God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation:' i e. judge me *by* pleading my cause, by vindicating me from the aspersions and delivering me from the persecutions of my enemies. Comp. Deut. 32. 36; Ps. 10. 18.

11. *The land had rest forty years.* Enjoyed prevailing peace, was exempt from tribute, and was in every respect in a tranquil and flourishing state, during that period. The forty years are perhaps to be dated from Othniel's being raised up to judge Israel ——¶ *And Othniel—died.* 'Othniel had rescued Israel from idolatry

12 ¶ [p] And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD strengthened [q] Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD.

13 And he gathered unto him the children of Ammon and [r] Amalek, and went and smote Israel, and possessed [s] the city of palm-trees.

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p ch. 2. 19. q 1 Sam. 12. 9. r ch. 5. 14. s ch. 1. 16.

and servitude; his life and their innocence and peace ended together. How powerful the presence of one good man is in a church or state, is best found in his loss.' *Bp Hall.* An attentive examination of the chronology of this book makes it all but absolutely certain that it is somewhere near to this period that we are to refer the idolatry of the Danites and the war with the Benjamites, mentioned ch. 17—21. Though, for the reasons stated in our Introduction, thrown together at the end of the book, the events no doubt took place either under or before Othniel's administration, who, though a judge, was not, as Henry remarks, such a king in Israel as to keep men from doing what was 'right in their own eyes.'

12. *The Lord strengthened Eglon.* Allowed him to become strong, suffered his providence to take such a course as would result in his becoming too powerful for the Israelites. It was not by positive agency, but by sovereign permission, that this result took place. The course of God's providence often favors the designs of his enemies, and they take advantage of it, while the effect, in Scripture style, is attributed to God himself; but it is only as we should say that God delivered a vessel, with all on board, into the hands of a pirate, because he caused the wind to blow in a particular direction, of which the pirate took advantage, and captured the vessel. The phraseology is liable to no just objection when rightly understood, and affords a clue to the explanation of hundreds of passages in the sacred volume. 'Rather than Israel shall want a scourge for their sin, God himself shall raise them up an enemy. Moab had no quarrel but his own ambition; but God meant by the ambition of the one party, to punish the ambition of the other; his justice can make one sin the executioner of another, while neither shall look for any measure from him but judgment.' *Bp. Hall.*

13. *And he gathered.* That is, God gathered; in the sense above explained. He gathered, by allowing Eglon to gather, the forces of these neighboring tribes, who were predisposed by ancient enmity to enter into the alliance.——¶ *Possessed the city of palm-trees.* Jericho, or rather the site of Jericho, with the adjacent territory, as the city itself was in ruins. On this site, Eglon probably pitched his camp, erected fortifications, and if Josephus be correct, fixed here his residence. His object was undoubtedly to obtain command of the fords of the Jordan, which would not only open to him a free communication with the land of Moab, but prevent also the tribes on the east and the west of the river forming a junction of forces. Ac-

14 So the children of Israel [t] served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years.

15 But when the children of Israel [u] cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a man [v] left-handed:

[t] Deut. 28. 40.

[u] ver. 9. Ps. 78. 34. [v] ch. 20. 16.

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cordingly the first step taken by Ehud, when assured of victory, v. 28, was to take possession of these fords, and thus cut off the retreat of the enemy.

14. *The children of Israel served Eglon eighteen years.* 'Israel seems as born to servitude; they came from their bondage in the land of Egypt, to serve in the land of promise. They had neglected God, now they were neglected of God; their sins had made them servants, whom the choice of God had made free, yea his first-born. Worthy are they to serve those men whose false gods they had served; and to serve them always in thraldom, whom they had once served in idolatry. We may not measure the continuance of punishment by the time of the commission of sin; one minute's sin deserves a torment beyond all time.' *Bp. Hall.*

15. *Cried unto the Lord.* With strong and earnest supplications. 'Doubtless Israel was not so insensible of their own misery, as not to complain sooner than the end of eighteen years. The first hour they sighed for themselves, but now they cried unto God. The very purpose of affliction is to make us importunate; he hears the secret murmurs of our grief, yet will not seem to hear us, till our cries be loud and strong. God sees it best for the penitent to dwell for the time under their sorrows; he sees us sinking all the while, yet he lets us alone till we be at the bottom; and when once we can say, "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee," instantly follows, "The Lord heard me." A vehement suitor cannot but be heard of God, whatsoever he asks. If our prayers want success, they want heart; their blessing is according to their vigor.' *Bp. Hall.*——¶ *A man left-handed.* Heb. 'a man shut or obstructed of his right hand;' i. e. not able readily to use it. Chal. 'contracted or impeded in his right hand.' Syr. 'a man whose right hand was torpid.' The Septuagint renders it *an ambidexter*, i. e. one who could use both hands alike; from which the Vulgate, 'who could use either hand as a right hand,' for neither of which is there any authority in the original. The true import of the Heb. undoubtedly is, that through disease, injury, or some other infirmity, he made little or no use of his right hand, but employed his left only, a circumstance which would seem to render him less fit for war, as he must necessarily use his sword somewhat awkwardly. 'Yet God chose this left-handed man to be the man of his right hand, whom he would "make strong for himself." It was God's right hand that gained Israel the victory, (Ps. 44. 3,) not the right hand of the instruments he employed.' *Henry.* It is remarkable that although the name 'Benjamin,' signifies *the son of the right hand*, yet as appears, from ch. 20. 16, multitudes of this tribe were from some

and by him the children of Israel sent a present unto Eglon the king of Moab.

16 But Ehud made him a dagger which had two edges, of a cubit length: and he did gird it under his raiment upon his right thigh.

17 And he brought the present unto Eglon king of Moab: and Eglon *was* a very fat man.

18 And when he had made an end to offer the present, he sent away the people that bare the present.

cause or other left-handed; so far are men's characters oftentimes from corresponding with their names.——¶ *Sent a present.* Either the *tribute-money* which Eglon had imposed upon the Israelites, or a gratuity over and above their ordinary tribute, sent to conciliate the favor of the lord of Moab, their present master. The former we suppose to be the most probable interpretation, as the original, *Mincha*, repeatedly occurs in this sense. Similar exactions on the part of the despotic rulers of the East continue to be levied upon subject provinces to the present day, and it is well known that their exorbitant demands of this kind are among the principal causes of the impoverished state of the oriental nations, and of the frequent insurrections that occur among them. It is possible that Eglon's oppressions in this way had become so grievous to the Israelites, that they could bear them no longer, and accordingly in their distress groaned out to God for deliverance.

16. *Ehud made him a dagger.* Caused to be made; just as Joshua, ch. 5. 3, is said to have 'made him sharp knives,' that is, by the ministry of others.——¶ *Of a cubit length.* The original word (גמד *gomed*) here rendered *cubit*, is of very doubtful signification. As the kindred root in Chald. has the import of *contracted*, Michaelis suggests that it probably means an instrument made *shorter* than usual for the purpose intended. The Sept. renders it 'of a span length,' and most of the versions understand it in the same sense. A Jewish cubit is nearly two feet; a span is about eight inches, a much more convenient length for a poniard or stiletto, which would undoubtedly have been the modern name of Ehud's instrument.——¶ *Upon his right thigh.* Whence it could be more easily drawn forth by his left hand.

18. *Made an end to offer.* When he had ended all the ceremonies which in those days were customary in presenting gifts to great men. ——¶ *The people that bare the present.* A considerable number of persons seems to have been employed on this occasion, not so much because the quantity or variety of the presents required it, as for the sake of etiquette and a somewhat pompous display. The Orientals habitually affect a great parade in presenting their gifts, especially to persons of power and distinction. 'Through ostentation,' says Maillet, 'they never fail to load upon four or five horses what might easily be carried on one. In like manner as to jewels, trinkets, and other things of value, they place in fifteen dishes, what a single plate would very well hold.' It appears

19 But he himself turned again [w] from the quarries that *were* by Gilgal, and said, I have a secret errand unto thee, O king: who said, Keep silence. And all that stood by him went out from him.

20 And Ehud came unto him; and he was sitting in a summer- [x] parlor, which he had for him-

[w] Josh. 4. 20.

[x] Amos. 3. 15.

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evident from the next verse that Ehud accompanied this party some distance on their way homewards and then returned himself alone to execute, without accomplices, the deed which he meditated, and to which he was probably impelled by a divine prompting.

19. *From the quarries.* Heb. פסלים *pesilim*, from the root, פסל *pâsal, to cut out, or carve, as a sculptor*, whence several of the ancient versions understand the word of *idols*, or *graven images*, by which it is generally rendered. It was perhaps the place where idolatrous statues of stone were *cut out of the quarry* and erected as objects of worship by the Moabites. This might have been done in contempt of the religion and worship of the Israelites, and the sight of them may have stirred up afresh the pious indignation of Ehud, and animated him with new zeal to accomplish the work upon which he was intent.——¶ *I have a secret errand.* Heb. דבר סתר *debar sëther, a word or thing of concealment, of secresy.*——¶ *Who said, Keep silence.* This is generally understood as addressed to Ehud, intimating that he was to keep silent, and not declare his message till the king's attendants had withdrawn. But a preferable sense we think is that given by Geddes in his translation, 'The king said, Privacy!' which was equivalent to a command to his servants to leave the room. This is confirmed by the Chal., Syr., and Arab. versions, and also by the connexion, as the next clause evidently expresses the performance of a command.

20. *Sitting in a summer parlor.* Heb. בעלית המקרה *bäăliyath hammekërah, in an upper room or chamber of cooling.* The extreme heat of the climate obliged the Orientals to adopt various devices for ventilating and cooling their apartments. For this purpose they made their doors large, and their chambers spacious; but they soon found that such simple contrivances were insufficient and that other methods of cooling their habitations were necessary. At Aleppo, according to Russel, this was effected by means of kiosks, which are a sort of wooden divans or stages, which project a little way from their other buildings, and hang over the street. They are raised about a foot and a half higher than the floor of the room, to which they are quite open, and by having windows in front and on each side, a great draught of air is produced, causing a refreshing coolness in the sultry heat of summer. Another method of compassing the same end is by ventilators. The houses in Persia are ventilated by means of a triangular building which rises far above the terrace roof, and is open at top, so as to receive the wind in whatever direction it blows. The summer parlor of Eglon was undoubtedly cooled by some of these contrivances, which

self alone: and Ehud said, I have a message from God unto thee. And he arose out of *his* seat.

21 And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly:

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proves that expedients for mitigating the extreme heat of the climate are of very great antiquity.——¶ *Which he had for himself alone.* Into which he went when he wished to be retired, and so better adapted to hearing a secret message. The circumstance is probably mentioned here by way of accounting for his servants' waiting so long, v. 23, before going in to him. From a circumstance mentioned by Mr. Bruce, it appears that Ehud acted in strict conformity to the customs of the time and place, so that neither the suspicion of the king nor his attendants should be excited by his conduct. It was usual for the attendants to retire when secret messages were to be delivered. 'I drank a dish of coffee,' says he, 'and told him, that I was a bearer of a confidential message from Ali Bey of Cairo, and wished to deliver it to him without witnesses, whenever he pleased. The room was accordingly cleared without delay, excepting his secretary, who was also going away, when I pulled him back by the clothes, saying, stay, if you please; we shall need you to write the answer.'——¶ *I have a message from God unto thee.* A message to be delivered not in word, but by action. The Hebrew signifies *a thing, a business, an affair*, as well as *a word.* The message was on the point of Ehud's dagger. The original for 'God' moreover is a term common both to the true God and the supposed deities of the heathen, so that Eglon, as an idolator, might have understood it in a very different sense from that intended by Ehud. Yet we think it most probable on the whole that he would understand Ehud, an Israelite, as speaking of the God of Israel, and that a general feeling of reverence inspired by the mention of *the deity* or *the powers above*, even though his conceptions of such a power were very vague, was sufficient to prompt him to pay a serious attention to what was professedly uttered in his name.——¶ *And he arose from his seat.* Thus paying a becoming respect to a divine communication. 'Though a king, though a heathen king, though rich and powerful, though now tyrannizing over the people of God, though a fat, unwieldy man that could not easily rise nor stand long, yet when he expected to receive orders from heaven, he rose out of his seat, and whether it was low and easy, or high and stately, he quitted it, and stood up when God was about to speak to him, thereby owning God his Superior. This shames the irreverence of many who are called Christians, and yet when a message from God is delivered to them study to show by all marks of carelessness how little they regard it.' *Henry.* His rising also gave Ehud a favorable opportunity of striking the fatal blow.

21. *Took the dagger—and thrust it*, &c. A correct estimate of the moral character of this bold deed of Ehud can only be formed by settling the previous question, whether in

performing it he was acting under a divine commission, or prompted merely by a self-moved impulse of patriotism to free his country from the yoke of a usurper and a tyrant. If the latter were the fact we have no disposition to justify the course adopted by Ehud, although it may be plausibly maintained to be according to the acknowledged right of nature and of nations for subjects to free themselves from bondage and restore liberty to a country unjustly enslaved by taking the life of their oppressor. Most nations, both in ancient and modern times, that have recovered themselves from political thraldom, have taken this course, and apparently with the approbation of the great mass of mankind. At any rate, the objection, against this act of Ehud as a base assassination, comes with an ill grace from those who admire and eulogise the conduct of Brutus in stabbing Cæsar in the senate-house, on the plea of ridding his country of a tyrant. But the deed of Ehud is doubtless to be vindicated on other grounds. There is every reason, we think, to look upon him as moved to this undertaking by an impulse from above. It is expressly said, v. 15, that God raised him up as a savior to the country, and how could he save his country but by crushing the power which held it in subjection? Again, we are brought to the same conclusion by considering the peculiar circumstances under which the deed was accomplished. In view of the dangers attending it, what but the confidence of being divinely directed could have induced him, after dismissing his attendants at Gilgal, to return alone and attempt the execution of his purpose? How could he otherwise presume to think that he, a single person, and disabled in his right hand, could reach the heart of the king amidst the circle of his officers and guards? How could he expect, enemy as he was, to be admitted to a private interview? And if admitted, how could he have looked for an incident so favorable to his object as the king's ordering all the company to leave the room? And then, should he succeed in dispatching the king, what prospect had he of effecting his escape?—and yet, should he fail to escape, the whole enterprise, as far as the deliverance of his country was concerned, would have been abortive. We cannot therefore resist the evidence arising from these considerations that Ehud acted in this matter in virtue of a commission from God, who saw fit thus to punish the oppressor of his people after having first made use of him for their correction. He would of course know that the prompting to the act was of God, by the Spirit that came upon him, the impulses of which carried their own evidence along with them, and so gave him full assurance at once of the lawfulness and the success of the attempt, of both which he would otherwise have had the utmost reason to doubt. 'If he be sure that God bids him do it, he is sure both that he may do it, and that he shall do it; for a command from God is sufficient to bear us out, and to bring us off, both against our consciences and against all the world.' *Henry*. It is not however to be imagined that Ehud's conduct is to be followed as a precedent; for no man can dare to follow it unless he have infallible evidence

22 And the haft also went in after the blade: and the fat closed upon the blade, so that he could not draw the dagger out of his belly; and the dirt came out.

23 Then Ehud went forth through the porch, and shut the doors of the parlor upon him, and locked them.

24 When he was gone out, his servants came; and when they saw that, behold, the doors of the parlor *were* locked, they said, Surely he covereth his feet in his summer-chamber.

25 And they tarried till they were ashamed: and behold, he opened not the doors of the parlor, therefore they took a key

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that he is called of God to do it; but as no man can expect such a call at this time, no man can without the deepest criminality presume to imitate his example.

22. *And the dirt came out.* According to some, 'and it (the blade) went out behind.' The obscurity of the original renders it difficult to affix any determinate sense to the words.

23. *Ehud went forth*, &c. By a remarkable providence, Eglon fell silently without uttering any shriek or outcry, which might have been overheard by his servants at a distance. His dying groans seem to have been stifled in his own fat, and thus the escape of his executioner was signally favored. Ehud accordingly walked forth, shutting and locking the doors, and probably taking the key with him, with such an air of composure and innocence as gave no ground of suspicion to any of the guards that he might have passed, of what had taken place within. His calm and sedate demeanor under such trying circumstances is to be resolved into that strong confidence in God, by which he was actuated in executing the commission.

24. *He covereth his feet.* This appears to have been an idiomatic and colloquial form of expression for lying down to sleep. When this was done they dropped their slippers, lifted up their feet, and covered them with their long loose garments. Thus in the only other place where this phrase occurs, 1 Sam. 24. 3, we read, that Saul 'went into a cave to cover his feet,' i. e. to refresh himself by sleep. This interpretation, though varying from that of several of the ancient versions, which regard it as a euphemism for a different act, is confirmed by the Arabic and Syriac, and also by Josephus, who says, 'The king's servants were very still, as supposing that the king had *composed himself to sleep.*' From the case of Ishbosheth, 2 Sam. 4. 5, and of David, 2 Sam. 11. 2, it is evident that the custom of taking repose in those hot countries in the middle of the day was by no means unusual.

25. *Tarried till they were ashamed.* That is, perplexed, confounded, not knowing what to make of it. They were greatly agitated between the fear of disturbing him on the one hand, and of neglecting their duty on the other. Though the primary import of the original is that of *feeling shame*, yet it is also in repeated instances found to be closely connected with the idea of *disappoint-*

and opened *them:* and behold, their lord *was* fallen down dead on the earth.

26 And Ehud escaped while they tarried; and passed beyond the quarries, and escaped unto Seirath.

27 And it came to pass when he was come, that [y] he blew a trumpet in the [z] mountain of Ephraim, and the children of Israel went down with him from the mount, and he before them.

28 And he said unto them, Follow after me: for [a] the LORD hath delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hand. And they went down after him, and took [b] the fords of Jordan toward Moab, and suffered not a man to pass over.

29 And they slew of Moab at that time about ten thousand men, all lusty, and all men of valor: and there escaped not a man.

[y] ch. 5. 14, and 6. 34. 1 Sam. 13. 3. [z] Josh. 17. 15. ch. 7. 24, and 17. 1, and 19. 1.

[a] ch. 7. 9, 15. 1 Sam. 17. 47. [b] Josh. 2. 7. ch. 12. 5.

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*ment in long waiting*, and consequent *perplexity, chagrin, mortification.* Thus Jer. 14. 3, 'And their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters: they have come to the pits, and found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were *ashamed* and confounded, and covered their heads.' Job. 6. 19, 20, 'The troops of Tema looked, the companies of Sheba waited for them. They were *confounded* because they had hoped; they came thither and were *ashamed.*' Comp. Ps. 6. 1; Jer. 14. 4; Is. 19. 9.——¶ *Behold, their lord was fallen down.* Heb. אדניהם *adonëhem, their lords*, pl. according to the Heb. idiom. See on Gen. 1. 1. 'God, when he hath chastened his children, doth many times cast the rod into the fire.' *Trapp.*

27. *Blew a trumpet in the mountain of Ephraim.* That is, caused trumpets to be blown in different directions throughout that region. By the 'mountain of Ephraim,' is not meant any particular mountain, but the mountainous tract or district generally. Ehud, though a Benjamite, applied first to the tribe of Ephraim, probably for the reason that that tribe, lying immediately contiguous, was more numerous than his own, and had more men to spare, as the Benjamites not long before, in consequence of the events mentioned ch. 19—21, seem to have been reduced to a mere handful. It is not unlikely, moreover, that the Ephraimites had been the principal sufferers under the rod of Moab.——¶ *The children of Israel went down from the mount.* After being collected in considerable numbers by his emissaries.

28. *Took the fords of Jordan.* He first secured these passes and set a strong guard upon them, to cut off all communication between the Moabites on the west, and those in their own country on the east of Jordan, so that those who might attempt to fly should have no means of escape, and those who might resolve to fight no prospect of assistance from abroad. 'He thus shut them up in that land as their prison, in which they were pleasing themselves as their palace and paradise.' *Henry.*

29. *All lusty, and all men of valor.* The best and choicest of all the king

30 So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel; and [c] the land had rest fourscore years.

31 ¶ And after him was [d] Shamgar the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men [e] with an ox-goad; [f] and he also delivered [g] Israel.

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[c] ver. 11. [d] ch. 5. 6, 8. 1 Sam. 13. 19, 22. [e] 1 Sam. 17. 47, 50. [f] ch. 2. 16. [g] ch. 4. 1, 3, &c. and 10. 7, 17, and 11. 4, &c. 1 Sam. 4. 1.

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of Moab's forces, picked troops, composed of men of bulk and stature, able-bodied and high-spirited, whom Eglon had stationed on that side the Jordan to overawe and keep Israel in subjection. Chal. 'every one terrible and full of valor.'

31. *After him was Shamgar.* Of the tribe and family of Shamgar nothing is said in the Scripture, except that he was the son of Anath, nor are we informed how long he judged Israel. From his having to do principally with the Philistines, it is probable that he originated in one of the tribes bordering upon their territory, as perhaps that of Judah or Dan. ——¶ *With an ox-goad.* Heb. מלמד *malmad*, from the root למד *lamad, to teach*, and literally rendered 'an instructer of oxen;' i. e. an instrument by which they are brought into due subjection, analogous to which we have, Hos. 10. 11, עגלה מלמדה *eglëh malmedâh, a heifer that is taught*, and Jer. 31. 18, 'I was chastised כעגל לא למד *keëgel lo lummâd, as a bullock not taught*, i. e. not trained to subjection, though rendered less accurately in our translation, 'unaccustomed to the yoke.' The Sept. and Vulg. render the original by *a coulter* or *ploughshare*, but that the ox-goad still used in Palestine is a weapon sufficiently destructive for this purpose, if wielded by a strong and skilful hand, appears highly probable from the description of this implement given by Maundrell. He says, 'the country people were now everywhere at plough in the fields, in order to sow cotton. It was observable, that in ploughing they used goads of extraordinary size; upon measuring of several, I found them eight feet long, and at the bigger end six inches in circumference. They were armed at the lesser end with a sharp prickle for driving the oxen, at the other end with a small spade, or paddle of iron, strong and massy, for cleansing the plough from the clay that encumbers it in working. May we not from hence conjecture, that it was with such a goad as one of these, that Shamgar made that prodigious slaughter related of him; Judges 3. 21? I am confident that whoever should see one of these instruments, would judge it to be a weapon not less fit, perhaps fitter, than a sword for such an execution. Goads of this sort I saw always used hereabouts, and also in Syria; and the reason is, because the same single person both drives the oxen, and also holds and manages the plough; which makes it necessary to use such a goad as is above described, to avoid the encumbrance of two instruments.' This is confirmed by Mr. Buckingham, who, in describing his journey from Soor (Tyre) to Acre, remarks of the ploughing that he witnessed, that 'oxen were yoked in pairs, and the plough was small and of simple construction, so that it seemed necessary

## CHAPTER IV.

AND [a] the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD when Ehud was dead.

[a] ch. 2. 19.

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for two to follow each other in the same furrow, as they invariably did. The husbandman holding the plough with one hand, by a handle like that of a walking crutch, bore in the other a goad of seven or eight feet in length, armed with a sharp point of iron at one end, and at the other with a plate of the same metal shaped like a caulking-chisel. One attendant only was necessary for each plough, as he who guided it, with one hand spurred the oxen with the points of the goad, and cleansed the earth from the ploughshare by its spaded heel with the other.' Shamgar was perhaps quietly following the plough, at the time when the Philistines made a sudden inroad upon the country for purposes of plunder, and being moved by God to oppose them, and having neither spear nor sword at hand, he availed himself of the implement with which he was driving his oxen, and with that effected the slaughter here described. The achievement was probably miraculous on his part, like that of Samson in killing so many thousands of the Philistines with the jaw-bone of an ass; though several respectable commentators suppose that instead of withstanding the enemy alone, he put himself at the head of a hastily gathered band of country people, who, arming themselves with the implements of tillage with which they were occupied, fell upon the invaders and put them to a total rout. In support of this sense it is affirmed, that a leader is often put for the force which he commands, as above, ch. 1. 13, where Othniel is said to have taken Kirjath-sepher, though no one will suppose he did it unassisted. So also in regard to the exploits of the three champions of Israel mentioned 2 Sam. 23. 8–12. But this interpretation appears on the whole less likely. The incident is evidently recorded as something uncommon and marvellous, and as divine interpositions no more strange frequently occurred during the days of the judges, we deem it safer to abide by the exact letter of the text. 'It is no matter how weak the weapon is, if God direct and strengthen the arm. An ox-goad, when God pleases, shall do more than Goliath's sword. And sometimes he chooses to work by such unlikely means, that the excellency of the power may appear to be of God.' *Henry.* The brief account here given of Shamgar here suggests the remark, (1) That the most distinguished men have often risen from the meanest employments. (2) That when a ploughman is raised up by God to hold the reins of government, or a fisherman is elevated to the apostleship, he will qualify them for their work and bless them with success.

## CHAPTER IV.

1. *The children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord.* This mode of expression when used, as here, of the whole body of the nation, seems to imply a general and open defection from the worship of God, so that the services of the sanctuary were in a great measure neglected.

2 And the LORD [b]sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan that reigned in [c]Hazor, the captain of whose host *was* [d]Sisera, which dwelt in [e]Harosheth of the Gentiles.

3 And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD; for he had

[b] ch. 2. 14. [c] Josh. 11. 1, 10, and 19. 36. [d] 1 Sam. 12. 9. Ps. 83. 9. [e] ver. 13, 16.

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'What a continued circle is here of sins, judgments, repentance, deliverance! The conversation with idolaters taints them with sin, their sin draws on judgment, the smart of the judgment moves them to repentance, on their repentance follows speedy deliverance, on their peace and deliverance they sin again! Who would not think idolatry an absurd and unnatural thing? which as it hath the fewest inducements, so hath it also the most direct prohibitions from God; and yet after all their warnings, Israel falls into it again. Neither affliction nor repentance can secure an Israelite from redoubling his worst sin, if he be left to his own frailty.' *Bp. Hall.*——¶ *When Ehud was dead.* This appears to be inserted not merely to indicate the time when this apostasy took place, but also to acquit Ehud of all participation in it. Had he been alive there would have been less likelihood of its occurring.

2. *Sold them.* See on ch. 2. 14. ——¶ *Jabin, king of Canaan.* That is, of the region where the greatest body of the Canaanites dwelt, which was in the northern section of the country. This Jabin was perhaps a descendant, as well as successor of the king of the same name, who reigned also in Hazor, and who was routed and slain, and his city burnt by Joshua, Josh. 11. 1, 10. In process of time, it appears that the city had been rebuilt, its power regained, its losses retrieved, and by degrees the king of Hazor had obtained the ascendency over Israel, who were exceedingly oppressed under his rod. Their former defeat by the chosen people, would naturally provoke them to make their burdens as heavy as possible, while on the other hand, the misery of the sufferers would be aggravated by the reflection, that these Canaanites had once been conquered and subdued by them, and might now have been under their feet and incapable of molesting them, if their own slothfulness, cowardice, and unbelief had not given them the advantage. To be oppressed by those whom their fathers had conquered, and whom they had foolishly spared, must have greatly embittered their bondage. No reverses are so trying as those which give the upper hand to persons or events that have once been under our complete control.——¶ *Harosheth of the Gentiles.* Or, 'Harosheth of the nations,' i. e. of the heathen nations as opposed to the Hebrews, so called perhaps from the remains of the Canaanitish nations having resorted thither in great numbers to assist Sisera, the commander of Jabin's armies, and to obtain his protection. It was situated in the tribe of Naphtali, near the west borders of the Lake Samechonitis, in the region which was afterwards called, perhaps in allusion to this passage, 'Galilee of the Gentiles.'

3. *Cried unto the Lord.* 'Those who abuse prosperity shall know the cries of adversity.' *Haweis.*——¶ *Nine hundred chariots of iron.*

nine hundred [f]chariots of iron; and twenty years [g]he mightily oppressed the children of Israel.

4 ¶ And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time.

[f] ch. 1. 19. [g] ch. 5. 8. Ps. 106. 42.

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Had so many at his service and under his control. It is probable that part of them belonged to the neighboring powers (ch. 5. 19,) who were confederate with him on this occasion, but altogether they made out the vast number here mentioned. 'God provides, on purpose, mighty adversaries for his church, that their humiliation may be greater in sustaining, and his glory may be greater in deliverance. *Bp. Hall.*——¶ *Twenty years.* A longer period of oppression than either of the former, because God proportions the judgments of his sinning people to the aggravation of their offences.

4. *And Deborah a prophetess.* Heb. דבורה אשה נביאה *Deborah ishâh nebiâh*, *Deborah a woman a prophetess.* The words 'prophet,' and 'prophetess,' are of a very extensive and somewhat ambiguous signification in the Old Testament, being sometimes applied to persons extraordinarily endowed of God with the power of foretelling future events or of working miracles, or of chanting or singing forth the praises of God under supernatural influence; and sometimes to those who were remarkably instructed in divine knowledge by the immediate inspiration of the Spirit of God, and therefore appointed to act as interpreters of his will. As to Deborah, she probably belonged to the latter class, and was perhaps only a woman of eminent holiness, prudence, and knowledge of divine things, by which she was qualified above any of the other sex then living to judge the people; that is, by acting as God's mouth to them, correcting abuses, redressing grievances, and determining causes, especially in matters pertaining to the law and the worship of God. She was resorted to by the people of Israel, from different parts, for judgment or counsel relative to subjects of general interest to the nation, or that part of it where she resided, and discharged her duty by expounding the Scriptures, and animating the magistrates in their several districts to put the laws in execution. 'I do not find any prophet in Israel during their sin; but so soon as I hear news of their repentance, mention is made of a prophetess, and judge of Israel. There is no better sign of God's reconciliation than the sending of his holy messengers to any people; he is not utterly fallen out with those whom he blesses with prophecy.' *Bp. Hall.* Under every dispensation the Most High exercises his prerogative as a sovereign in the bestowment of spiritual gifts, and though women, under the Christian economy, are precluded from the function of public teachers, yet nothing hinders them from making the most eminent attainments in divine knowledge, and becoming able in a private capacity to render the most signal services to the ministry and the cause of Christ. The import of the name Deborah is 'a bee;' an equivalent to which we find in the classic name *Melissa*, signifying also *a bee.* Females possessed of her spirit in respect to the assiduous

5 [h] And she dwelt under the palm-tree of Deborah, between Ramah and Beth-el in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.

h Gen. 35. 8.

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study of the Scriptures, will find themselves, like David, feeding upon that which is *sweeter* to their taste than honey or the honey-comb, and in the benevolent employments to which it will prompt them, will evince the *busy* and untiring diligence of their insect exemplar.——¶ *The wife of Lapidoth.* The termination of the word is the Heb. feminine plural, which very seldom occurs in the names of men. Some therefore render it 'woman of Lapidoth,' as if it were the name of a place. Others, as Lapidoth taken appellatively signifies *lamps*, would read it a 'woman of lamps,' i. e. one who made wicks for the lamps of the tabernacle. Others again, with more show of probability, would translate it a 'woman of illuminations or splendors,' by which they would understand a woman supernaturally enlightened, endowed with extraordinary wisdom, and who had thus become very eminent and illustrious. After all, the present rendering, 'wife of Lapidoth,' is the most probable. Thus 2 Kings 22. 14, 'Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum.' And for examples of feminine terminations in the names of men, see 'Shelomith,' 1 Chron. 23. 9; 'Meramoth,' Ezra 8. 33; and 'Mikloth,' 1 Chron. 27. 4.——¶ *Judged Israel.* That is, in the manner above described. It can hardly be supposed that she performed *all* the duties usually involved in the office of a judge of Israel, of which one of the principal was leading the tribes in person to war against the enemies and oppressors of their country. But so far as the work of judging the people depended upon counselling and directing them in difficult cases, and expounding the will of God under the influence of the spirit of prophecy, this, though a woman, she might be qualified to do. Had this office, at this time, been filled by a man, it would probably have given alarm to Jabin, and afforded a pretext to oppress the nation with still greater burdens, and perhaps to attempt to crush them altogether. Josephus, speaking of this period, says, 'When they (the Israelites) were become penitent, and were so wise as to learn that their calamities arose from their contempt of the laws, they besought Deborah, a certain prophetess among them, *to pray to God* to take pity on them, not to overlook them now they were ruined by the Canaanites.' Ant. B. V. ch. 5. Compare what is said of Samuel, 1 Sam. 7. 6, 8.

5. *She dwelt under the palm-tree of Deborah.* That is, perhaps, collect. a palm-grove, a pleasant and shady recess, amidst a thick plantation of palm-trees; which from this circumstance went ever after by the name of Deborah's palm-grove. Whether this is designed to intimate that her ordinary settled habitation was selected in this place, or that her judgment-seat was fixed here in the open air for hearing the applications that were made to her, it is not easy to determine. The original (יושבת *yoshebeth, was sitting,*) will admit of either sense. From the phrase 'sit-

6 And she sent and called [i] Barak the son of Abinoam out of [k] Kedesh-naphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, *saying*, Go, and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten

[i] Heb. 11. 32. [k] Josh. 19. 37.

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ting in judgment,' Ps. 9. 8, it would appear, that the latter is the more genuine import of the words.——¶ *Between Ramath and Bethel in mount Ephraim.* Consequently very near the confines of the tribes of Benjamin and Ephraim, in one of which lay Ramah, and in the other Bethel, the former about six miles north of Jerusalem, the latter about twelve.

6. *Kedesh-naphtali.* So called to distinguish it from two other cities of the same name, the one in Issachar, the other in Judah. This place was situated on an eminence, about eight miles north-west from the head of the sea of Galilee. To Kedesh she sent for Barak, in virtue of the authority with which she was invested as prophetess, and which seems to have been generally acknowledged by her people. 'He could do nothing without her head, nor she without his hands; both together made a complete deliverer and effected a complete deliverance. The greatest and best are not self-sufficient, but need one another.' *Henry.*——¶ *Hath not the Lord God of Israel commanded,* &c. The usual form of a strong affirmation. It does not appear, however, that Barak had received any command whatever *previous* to this time.——¶ *Go and draw toward mount Tabor.* The true sense of the term 'draw,' in this connexion, is a point much debated by commentators. According to the rendering in our common translation, it would naturally be taken as a command to *approach toward* mount Tabor; but this evidently is incorrect, as the verb in the original never has this meaning, and the exact rendering of the preposition is *in* or *upon* mount Tabor, instead of *toward.* A nearer approximation to the sense of the Hebrew must be attempted, and here as in other cases of doubtful interpretation, the *prevailing usage* (usus loquendi) of the sacred writers in regard to the word in question, must afford the clew to our inquiries. That its primary import is *to draw, to draw out*, and thence, in some cases, *to prolong, to protract*, as the sound of a trumpet in blowing, is universally conceded. Indeed, Le Clerc, Schmid, and others, on the ground of its being applied to the *long-drawn* sound of a trumpet, Ex. 17. 13; Josh. 6. 5, propose to supply the original word for trumpet and to take it as a command to Barak to go and *blow the trumpet* on mount Tabor, as a signal for the gathering of the tribes, as Ehud did upon mount Ephraim. Gesenius and Winer in their lexicons, understand it of *drawing out*, or *asunder*, a military force, i. e. intrans. *extending*, *expanding*, *spreading themselves out.* A preferable sense we think to be that of *drawing*, *drafting*, or *enlisting*, not perhaps by compulsion, but by argument and persuasion; not so much to raise an army of *conscripts*, as a band of *volunteers;* as will be easily inferred from the tenor of Deborah's song in the ensuing chapter, which is in part a reproof to several of the tribes for not *offering themselves wil-*

thousand men of the children of Naphtali, and of the children of Zebulun;

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*lingly* on this perilous emergency. How much support this rendering receives from parallel usage will be seen from the following citations. Cant. 1. 4, '*Draw* me, we will run after thee;' i. e. secretly but powerfully constrain me. Jer. 31. 3, 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness *have I drawn* thee.' Hos. 11. 4, '*I drew* them with cords of a man, with bands of love;' i. e. by the power of moral suasion; by arguments and motives suited to their rational natures. In like manner, we suppose Barak was ordered to go and use his utmost endeavors to stir up the minds of his countrymen, and as a popular advocate of any cause *draws* partisans after him, so he was to prevail upon as many as possible to engage with him in the proposed enterprise. See on ch. 5. 14.——¶ *Mount Tabor.* An isolated mountain which rises on the north-eastern side of the great plain of Esdraelon in Galilee, and situated about six miles south-east of Nazareth. It is described as having the appearance of a cone with the point cut off; but travellers vary in their estimate of its height, which is probably about 2,500 or 3,000 feet. It is remarkable for standing alone, though there are several eminences in the neighborhood, all which it completely overtops. It is very fertile and is entirely covered with green oaks and other trees, shrubs, and odoriferous plants. Roads and paths are made on the south side of the mountain, which lead to its top by winding ascents, and are sufficiently easy to admit of riding to the top. When arrived at the summit, the traveller is astonished to find an oval of half a mile in extent, commanding the finest view any where to be obtained in the whole compass of Palestine. On this plain at the east end is a mass of ruins, apparently the remains of churches, towers, strong walls, and fortifications, all bearing the traces of having been erected in a very remote antiquity. Several grottos and cisterns are also pointed out. 'From its top,' says Maundrell, 'you have a prospect which, if nothing else, will reward the labor of ascending it. It is impossible for man's eyes to have a higher gratification of this nature. On the north-west, you discern, at a distance, the Mediterranean, and all round you have the spacious and beautiful plains of Esdraelon and Galilee. Turning a little southward you have in view the high mountains of Gilboa, fatal to Saul and his sons. Due east you discern the sea of Tiberias, distant about one day's journey.' The mountain is now called *Djebel Tour.*——¶ *Ten thousand men.* Ten thousand more or less. Not that he was to be tied to this precise number, nor exclusively to these two tribes; for it is plain from ch. 5. 14–23, that several other tribes, as Ephraim, Benjamin, Manasseh, and Issachar, volunteered recruits on the occasion, while those that withheld them are reproved, and Meroz cursed for taking the stand of neutrality; but the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali are more especially mentioned, because they had probably been the principal sufferers under the oppressive

7 And [l]I will draw unto thee, to the [m]river Kishon, Sisera the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand?

8 And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, *then* I will not go.

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[l] Exod. 14. 4. [m] ch. 5. 21. 1 Kings 18. 40. Ps. 83. 9, 10.

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rule of Jabin, and were nearer at hand to the scene of the approaching conflict than any of the rest. In addition to this, Barak himself was of the tribe of Naphtali, and the esteem in which he was doubtless held, would naturally bring numbers of them to his standard.

7. *And I will draw unto thee.* The same word as that employed in the preceding verse, and having a kindred import. God would 'draw the hosts of Sisera to the river Kishon,' by so ordering the events of his providence as to *afford motives* to them to concentrate in all their force at that point. They were not to be drawn together by physical, but by moral influence. Their counsels were to be so overruled by a secret divine direction, that they should result in their being brought together at that place, as sheep for the slaughter, and yet their utmost freedom of will left undisturbed. 'When God will destroy his enemies, their resistance is in vain; and their gathering to battle is only rushing into the snare.' *Haweis.*——¶ *The river Kishon.* See on ch. 5. 21.

8. *If thou wilt go with me*, &c. By making his obedience conditional when the command was absolute, Barak showed that his faith was marred by infirmity, and this conviction is confirmed by Deborah's answer, in which she intimates to him that he shall not receive the same honor or distinction from the enterprise, that he would otherwise have done. In like manner, Moses' lack of faith, when ordered to go upon a mission to Pharaoh, led God to divide the honor of that embassy with Aaron, which would otherwise have redounded to Moses alone, Ex. 4. 14. Still it is evident from the apostle's commendation, Heb. 11. 32, that Barak possessed *true* though *weak* faith, and that it was from a profound conviction of the spirit of God's dwelling and speaking in Deborah, that he so earnestly desired her presence. Could he but enjoy this, he would feel that he possessed a pledge and earnest of the divine blessing, and this was showing a respect to God's prophets, which implied a genuine faith, and was no doubt highly acceptable as far as it went. But though it would naturally be a source of great satisfaction and encouragement to him, to have the prophetess with him to animate his soldiers, and to be consulted as an oracle upon all occasions, yet it is plain that he ought to have gone directly forward without her, relying on the God of Deborah, who had expressly and unconditionally promised him the victory, v. 7. How rare, alas! is simple, child-like confidence in God! How difficult is it for men, and the best of men, to break away from undue dependance on an arm of flesh, even when assured by the most express declaration of God, that he will uphold and deliver them, and be to

9 And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honor; for the Lord shall [n] sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh.

10 ¶ And Barak called [o] Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh;

[n] ch. 2. 14.

[o] ch. 5. 18.

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them more than armies of strength, or munitions of rocks!

9. *I will surely go with thee.* An indulgence to human infirmity, such as the divine condescension often afforded to his weak and wavering servants. Were God's thoughts like ours and his ways like ours, he would have been far more apt to discard Barak altogether and say to him, that if he had not faith enough to trust the promise of Him who cannot lie, he would call some one to the service who had, and to whom he would give the glory of an exploit which he had in so cowardly a manner declined. But with characteristic kindness the Most High is pleased to yield somewhat to his perverseness, and Deborah, under the divine prompting, engages to accompany him. While the parties thus seem in effect to have changed sexes, it is obviously meet that some tokens of divine disapprobation should mark Barak's faint-heartedness, and he is consequently told that he is to share the glory of the victory with a weak woman.——¶ *The journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honor.* Heb. 'thine honor shall not be upon the way which thou goest.' That is, probably, the way, the conduct, the course which thou art proposing in this matter shall not be such as to redound to thy credit. If, however, it be taken as read in our translation, then the remark of Henry may be very well founded, that 'so confident was she of success that she calls his engaging in the war but the undertaking of a journey.'——¶ *The Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.* Some understand this of Deborah herself, but we think the designed allusion is to Jael. Of her the words may be understood literally; applied to Deborah they can only be explained by a figure of speech. Besides, if spoken of Deborah, the sentence merely declares what he knew before. He was no doubt aware that if she went with him it would diminish the credit of his success, yet notwithstanding he was sensible of this he insisted upon her accompanying him. But in regard to the part Jael was to act in the transaction, he of course knew nothing. This was a pure prediction uttered by Deborah in the spirit of prophecy, and such he would understand it to be when the event was accomplished.——¶ *Deborah—went with Barak to Kedesh.* Consequently Barak had previously, in obedience to her summons, left Kedesh and repaired to her at her residence between Ramah and Beth-el. The above conversation was undoubtedly held by the parties in person after they met.

10. *And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali.* The original for 'called' being in the Hiphil form, properly signifies *caused to call*, i. e. assemble by means of emissaries sent among the tribes. Whether this

and he went up with ten thousand men [p] at his feet: and Deborah went up with him.

11 Now Heber [q] the Kenite, *which was* of the children of [r] Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, had severed himself from the Kenites, and pitched his tent unto the plain of Zaanaim, [s] which *is* by Kedesh.

[p] See Ex. 11. 8. 1 Kings 20. 10. [q] ch. 1. 16.
[r] Num. 10. 29. [s] ver. 6.

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was done, as some suppose, by the blowing of trumpets, the common signal for war, or otherwise, is uncertain.——¶ *Went up with ten thousand men at his feet.* Heb. 'went up with his feet ten thousand men.' Such is the literal rendering of the original, from which most of the versions depart, and so lose the exact shade of meaning which we conceive the words intended to convey, viz. that the ten thousand accompanied him with as much alacrity as though all their feet had belonged to his body; in other words, they were entirely at his control, obsequious to his beck and bidding. The phrase may appear uncouth, but it is highly significant, and in all cases we would aim to adhere as closely as practicable to the very letter of the original. The intelligent reader would prefer to know precisely what the sacred penman says, and then to be left to put such a construction upon it as to his mind the evidence of the case admits or requires. Comp. ch. 5. 15, and 8. 5.—'The phrase "men at his feet," did not, I believe, refer to any particular class of soldiers, but applied to *all*, whether they fought in chariots, on horses, or on foot. This form of speech is used in eastern books to show how many *obey* or *serve* under the general. It may be taken from the action of a slave being prostrate at the feet of his master, denoting submission or obedience. In this way devotees, when addressing the gods, always speak of themselves as being at their feet. When the Orientals speak of his Majesty of Britain, they often allude to the millions who are at his feet. The governors, generals, or judges in the East, are said to have the people of such countries, or armies, or districts, at their feet. Nay, it is common for masters, and people of small possessions, to speak of their domestics as being at their feet. It is therefore heard every day, for "I will send my servants," *en-kal-adiyila*, "those at my feet."' *Roberts.*

11. *Now Heber the Kenite,* &c. This verse comes in here parenthetically, to prepare the way for what is soon to be said about Jael, a woman of this family. It would otherwise seem singular, that when the writer had before said, ch. 1. 16, that this family had passed into the tribe of Judah, and was dwelling in the wilderness south of Arad, that one of the stock was found abiding so far north as the tribe of Naphtali. He accounts for it by saying that the individual in question had emigrated to a distance from his brethren. The verse should have been included in the usual marks of a parenthesis.——¶ *Pitched his tent unto.* That is, gradually shifted his habitation towards. See on Gen. 13. 12. He doubtless followed the nomade mode of life.

12 *And they showed Sisera.* A

12 And they showed Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam was gone up to mount Tabor.

13 And Sisera gathered together all his chariots, *even* nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people that *were* with him, from Harosheth of the Gentiles unto the river of Kishon.

14 And Deborah said unto Barak, Up; for this *is* the day in which the LORD hath delivered Sisera into thy hand: [t] is not the LORD gone out before thee? So Barak went down from mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him.

15 And [u] the LORD discomfited Sisera, and all *his* chariots, and all *his* host, with the edge of

[t] Deut. 9. 3. 2 Sam. 5. 24. Ps. 68. 7. Isai. 52. 12. [u] Ps. 83. 9, 10. See Josh. 10.10.

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common idiom for 'it was told Sisera.' See on Gen. 16. 14.

13. *Gathered together.* The same word in the original with that spoken of Barak, v. 10, and there rendered 'called.' In both cases it means *to assemble by proclamation.*——¶ *Unto the river Kishon.* That is, gathered unto the river Kishon. The writer is not giving the boundaries of the several nations that were confederate with Sisera, nor stating that they extended from Harosheth of the Gentiles unto the river Kishon.

14. *Hath delivered Sisera into thy hand.* Will as certainly deliver as if it were already done. By Sisera here is meant his army, for as to Sisera himself, he was not delivered into the hand of Barak, but of Jael, as Deborah had before announced, v. 9.——¶ *Is not the Lord gone out before thee?* As God had expressly said, v. 7, that he would draw Sisera's army with his chariots and his multitudes together to the river Kishon, and then deliver them into Barak's hand, so Deborah in these words simply intimates that God had thus far been as good as his promise, that he had gone out before Barak in the sense of *putting everything in readiness* for his achieving the promised victory. The Lord's going before one in battle, when thus explained, is equivalent to *making sure a successful result.* So 2 Sam. 5. 24, 'And let it be when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself; for then *shall the Lord go out before thee*, to smite the host of the Philistines.' Nothing so encourages a good man in the way of duty or of danger, as the conviction that the Lord goes before him, and that he is acting under his direction.——¶ *Barak went down from the mount.* Instead of making it his chief object to maintain the post which he had chosen, with all its advantages, on the top of the mount, where he was completely unassailable by the enemy's iron chariots, he heroically sallies down to the level plain with his far inferior force, in order that by giving Sisera every advantage, the glory of the victory to be achieved over him might be so much the greater.

15. *The Lord discomfited Sisera.* Or, as the Heb. implies, *confounded*, *threw them into disorder*, *drove them tumultuously together*, causing chariots to break and overthrow chariots, and horses and men to be mingled in their fall in wild confusion. It was not so much the bold and unex-

the sword before Barak; so that Sisera lighted down off *his* chariot, and fled away on his feet.

16 But Barak pursued after the chariots, and after the host, unto Harosheth of the Gentiles: and all the host of Sisera fell upon the edge of the sword; *and* there was not a man left.

17 Howbeit, Sisera fled away on his feet to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite:

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pected charge of Barak that produced this effect, as a supernatural panic, a terror from God, that seized their spirits, threw them into irretrievable confusion, and made them an easy prey to the sword. It is said ch. 5. 20, that 'the stars from heaven fought against Sisera,' and Josephus gives the following very probable account of the terrific scene. 'When they were come to a close fight, there came down from heaven a great storm, with a vast quantity of rain and hail, and the wind blew the rain in the face of the Canaanites, and so darkened their eyes, their arrows and slings were of no advantage to them; nor would the coldness of the air permit the soldiers to make use of their swords, while this storm did not so much incommode the Israelites, because it came on their backs. They also took such courage upon the apprehension that God was assisting them, that they fell upon the very midst of their enemies, and slew a great number of them, so that some of them fell by the Israelites, some fell by their own horses, which were put into disorder, and not a few were killed by their own chariots.' Ant. B. V., ch. 5.——¶ *Sisera lighted down—and fled away on his feet.* To guard more effectually against being discovered. Had he fled in his chariot he would have been liable to be recognized and taken or slain. 'His chariots had been his pride and his confidence; and we may suppose that he had therefore despised and defied the armies of the living God, because they were all on foot, and had neither chariot nor horse, as he had; justly therefore is he made ashamed of his confidence, and forced to quit it, and thinks himself then most safe and easy when he has got clear of his chariot. Thus they are disappointed who rest on the creature.' *Henry.*

16. *Fell upon the edge of the sword.* Rather, fell *by* the edge of the sword, ——¶ *There was not a man left.* Heb. לא נשאר עד אחד *lo nisher ad ahod, there was not left unto one.* Josephus says that Sisera's army on this occasion consisted of three hundred thousand footmen, ten thousand horsemen, and three thousand chariots. Of these only nine hundred may have been *iron* chariots, as stated by the sacred historian.

17. *To the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite.* That is, probably, to Jael's apartment of the tent, the harem, the women's quarters. 'We must consider these Kenites as Arabs, and estimate their proceedings accordingly. Sisera's claim on Jael, in the absence of Heber, was perfectly proper. When a stranger comes to an Arab camp, where he has no acquaintance, he proceeds to the first tent, and if the proprietor is absent, his wife and daughters are not only authorised, but required, to perform the duties of hospitality to him. As a character for liberal hospitality is

for *there was* peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite.

18 ¶ And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in, my lord, turn in to me;

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an actual distinction of an Arab, no one can with honor repel from the tent a stranger who claims hospitality, nor, in ordinary circumstances, does any one desire to do so; on the contrary, there is rather a disposition to contend who shall enjoy the privilege of granting him entertainment. In the present instance Sisera's application to the tent of the Sheikh, whose privilege it more especially was to entertain strangers, was in the common course of things. As belonging to a friendly people, Sisera's claim for protection was as valid as a common claim for hospitality, and could not be refused. Having once promised protection to a person, and admitted him to his tent, the Arab is bound, not only to conceal his guest, but to defend him, even with his life, from his pursuers; and if his tent should be forced and his guest slain there, it is his duty to become the avenger of his blood. On these sentiments of honor Sisera seems to have relied; particularly after Jael had supplied him with refreshments, which, in the highest sense, are regarded as a seal to the covenant of peace and safety: and in fact, after all this an Arab would be bound to protect with his own life even his bitterest enemy, to whom he may inadvertently have granted his protection. It is probable that Jael introduced Sisera for safety into the inner or woman's part of the tent. This she might do without impropriety, although it would be the most grievous insult for any man to intrude there without permission. Sisera appears to have felt quite certain that the pursuers would not dare search the harem, and indeed it is almost certain that they would not have done so; for the Hebrews had too long and too recently been themselves a nomade people, not to have known that a more heinous and inexpiable insult could not be offered to the neutral Kenite Emir, than to disturb the sanctity of his harem, or even to enter, unpermitted, the outer part of his tent. We very much doubt whether they would have ventured, even if they had been certain that Sisera was there, to have entered to kill him, or take him thence, while under Heber's protection. This is an answer to Bp. Patrick, who would have recommended Jael not to have been so hasty to act herself, but to have waited till the pursuers came and took him. They could not take him, or even search for him, without inflicting on Heber a dishonor worse than death; neither could Jael have given him up to them without bringing everlasting infamy upon her family and tribe.' *Pict. Bible.*—— ¶ *There was peace between Jabin—and the house of Heber.* That is, there was no war; not that there was any league offensive or defensive between them, but they were not, like the Israelites, objects of hostility to Jabin. The Kenites, though they were proselytes and worshipped the true God according to the Mosaic law, yet as they were strangers by birth and laid claim to no inheritance in the promised land, they seem to have deemed it the best policy, in the midst of the fear not. And when he had turned in unto her into the tent, she covered him with a mantle.

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contentions around them, to preserve a strict neutrality and maintain peace, as far as possible, both with the Israelites and the Canaanites; and as their quiet, harmless way of life exempted them from suspicion, Jabin appears to have offered them no molestation. It was doubtless on these grounds that Sisera thought of taking refuge among them, not considering, says Henry, that though they themselves did not suffer by Jabin's power, yet they heartily sympathized with God's Israel that did.

18. *Turn in, my lord, turn in to me.* Perhaps no more appropriate comment can be furnished on these words, than the following extract from Pococke, giving an account of the manner in which he was treated in an Arab tent on his journey to Jerusalem:—'My conductor led me two or three miles to his tent, and there he sat with his wife and others round a fire. The Arabs are not so scrupulous as the Turks about their women; and though they have their harem, or women's part of the tent, yet such as they are acquainted with come into it. I was kept in the harem for greater security; the wife being always with me, *no person even daring to come* into the same apartment unless introduced by her.' Jael invited Sisera to take refuge in her own tent, or in her division of her husband's tent, into which no stranger might presume to enter, and where he naturally supposed himself to be in perfect safety. There is undoubtedly an *apparent* treachery in the conduct of Jael on this occasion, but the probability is that she was moved by a *divine impulse* to execute the deed she did. At first, indeed, on inviting him into the tent, she may have intended no more than the ordinary hospitalities which the Orientals have ever been accustomed to show to strangers and travellers, nor is it certain that she was even aware who he was, till after he had entered the tent. When she had ascertained this, the most natural conclusion certainly is, reasoning from the nature of woman, that she would have suffered him to lie still till Barak, who was on the pursuit, had come up, or would in some way have communicated information of his hiding-place to the Israeiltes. To fall upon him herself, unaided and alone, would appear to have been an exploit surpassing female fortitude, and would have been a conduct so decidedly and pointedly opposed to all the principles of honor by which Orientals are governed, that we know not how to account for it, unless she had been prompted by a suggestion from above, and this inference would seem to be confirmed, both by the fact that it had been expressly predicted that Sisera should be delivered into the hand of a woman, and by the eulogium of Deborah, ch. 5. 24, 'Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent,' on which see note. If this were the case, she is sufficiently vindicated by the fact, for God has a right to dispose of the lives of his creatures as he pleases, as we see in the case of Eglon, in the preceding chapter; and probably the cup of

19 And he said unto her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink; for I am thirsty. And she opened [x] a bottle of milk, and gave him drink, and covered him.

20 Again he said unto her, Stand in the door of the tent, and it shall be, when any man doth come and inquire of thee, and say, Is there any man here? that thou shalt say, No.

21 Then Jael Heber's wife [y] took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground:

[x] ch. 5. 25.

[y] ch. 5. 26.

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Sisera's iniquity was full, and his life already forfeited to divine justice. On the whole, therefore, the presumption is, that Jael did right, yet as the case was wholly extraordinary, it can never be established as a precedent for others.——¶ *Covered him with a mantle.* Or, a quilt, rug, or blanket.

19. *Opened a bottle of milk and gave him drink.* As if this were a more palatable draught than water. By thus doing more for him than he requested, she evinced a kinder care for his comfort, and increased his confidence and security. Josephus says it was 'sour milk,' which is not unlikely, as that is considered in the East a very grateful and cooling drink. See on ch. 5. 25.

20. *Thou shalt say, No.* It does not appear, however, that Jael *promised* to deny his being there. Our regard for others may prompt us to many acts of kindness for them, but there is a point beyond which we must not go. A fearer of God will not listen to a request that would involve the commission of sin, especially the sin of falsehood. The custom adopted in some families of instructing servants to say, 'Not at home,' when a master or mistress does not wish to receive company, is directly at variance with the dictates of Christian simplicity and sincerity, nor is it any thing in its favor that it here has the sanction of a wicked, heathen warrior, doomed to destruction. The practice of prevarication thus inculcated upon servants, may be expected to react upon those who employ them; for if they are taught to lie for others, they will be very apt to do it for themselves.

21. *Took a nail of the tent.* One of those long sharp pins or spikes which were driven into the ground, and to which cords were attached to stretch the cloth of the tent, and keep it firmly secured. They were probably made of iron; Josephus calls this an 'iron nail.' Shaw, describing the tents of the Bedouin Arabs, says, 'these tents are kept firm and steady, by bracing or stretching down their eaves with cords tied down to hooked wooden pins, well pointed, which they drive into the ground with a mallet; one of these pins answering to the nail, as the mallet does to the hammer, which Jael used in fastening to the ground the temples of Sisera.'——¶ *Took a hammer in her hand.* Heb. ותשם את המקבת בידה *vattâsem eth-hammakebeth beyâdâh, put an hammer in her hand.* As tents were often moved, she had probably acquired an expertness in the use of the implements necessary for fasten-

for he was fast asleep, and weary. So he died.

22 And behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said unto him, Come, and I will show thee the man whom thou seekest. And when he came into her *tent*, behold, Sisera lay dead, and the nail *was* in his temples.

23 So [z] God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the children of Israel.

24 And the hand of the children of Israel prospered, and prevailed against Jabin the king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan.

z Ps. 18. 47.

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ing and unfastening them.——¶*And fastened it into the ground.* Heb. 'and it went down, penetrated, to the ground.' The verb is neuter, and should be referred to the pin rather than to Jael.

23. *Subdued—Jabin the king of Canaan.* There is in the original an apparent paranomasia, or play upon words, of which the English reader entirely loses sight. The Heb. word for 'subdue,' and that for 'Canaan,' are from the same root; as if it were said, 'he humbled the son of humiliation;' he made good the destiny of *subjugation* implied in the very name 'Canaan.'

24. *Prospered and prevailed.* Heb. ותלך הלוך וקשה *vattĕlek halōk vekâshâh, going, went, and was hard.* On the use of the verb 'to go, or to walk,' for the gradual increase or progression of any thing, see on Gen. 3. 8. From this event was to be dated the complete deliverance of Israel from the yoke of Jabin. Having suffered so severely by their guilty and foolish forbearance towards their enemies, they now resolve to tolerate them no longer, but to make an effectual riddance of them, as a people to whom no mercy was to be shown without equally offending God and endangering their own interests. It was probably with an eye to the judicial sentence under which these devoted nations lay, that this formidable enemy in the space of two verses is three times called 'king of Canaan;' for as such he was to be destroyed, and so thoroughly *was* he destroyed, that the title 'king of Canaan,' occurs not again in the subsequent narrative.

## CHAPTER V.

The subject matter of the present chapter is the triumphal song, sung by Deborah and Barak, on occasion of the signal victory above recorded of the forces of Israel over the armies of Jabin and Sisera. The spirit of prophecy is nearly allied to the spirit of poetry, and when the efforts of genius are heightened by the promptings of inspiration, we may reasonably look for results that shall distance all human competition. Nor in the present instance shall we look in vain. Considered merely as a specimen of lyric composition, this ode of Deborah may challenge comparison with the finest effusions of the classic muse of any age or country. Though occasionally obscure in the original, and in the English translation, in some instances, scarcely intelligible, yet it evidently breathes the highest spirit of poetry. Its strains are lofty and impassioned, its

## CHAPTER V.

THEN [a]sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying,

2 Praise ye the LORD for the [b]avenging of Israel, [c]when the

[a] See Ex. 15. 1. Ps. 18. title. [b] Ps. 18. 47. [c] 2 Chron. 17. 16.

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images bold, varied, and lively, its diction singularly happy, and it is pervaded throughout by a vein of mingled beauty and sublimity to be found in the bards of inspiration only. Borne away by the ecstacy and energy of the divine impulse, she breaks forth in the most abrupt and impassioned appeals and personifications; at one moment, soaring upwards towards heaven, and then returning to earth; now touching upon the present, and now upon the past; and finally closing with the grand promise and result of all prophecy, and of all the dealings of God's providence, the overthrow of the wicked, and the triumph of the good. In arranging the course and connexion of the thoughts in the poem, the following divisions may be easily and naturally traced.

(1) A devout thanksgiving for the burst of patriotic feeling, which led the nation to arise and revenge their wrongs, with a summons to the heathen kings to listen to her song of triumph over their allies. v. 1–3.

(2) A description of the magnificent scenes at mount Sinai, and in the plains of Edom, when the Most High manifested himself in behalf of his people, exerting his miraculous power to bring them into the promised land. v. 4, 5.

(3) A graphic sketch of the degradation and oppression under which the nation groaned in consequence of their apostasy, the insecurity of travelling, and desertion of the villages during a twenty years' servitude. v. 6–8.

(4) The contrast to this exhibited in their present happy state of security from the incursions and depredations of their enemies, especially at the watering places, which were most exposed, and a vivid invocation to herself and Barak, as well as others, to join in a song of praise and triumph to the Author of their deliverance. v. 9–13.

(5) A commendation of such of the tribes as volunteered on the occasion, and a stern rebuke of those which ignobly remained at home. v. 14–18.

(6) A glowing description of the battle, and an invocation of curses on the inhabitants of Meroz, for not coming up to the help of their brethren in the time of their extremity. v. 19–23.

(7) A eulogy upon Jael, with a vivid description of the circumstances of Sisera's death. v. 24–27.

(8) A highly poetical change in the imagery, in which the mother of Sisera is introduced in anxious impatience for her son's return, and confidently anticipating the successful issue of the engagement; concluding with a solemn apostrophe to God, praying that all his enemies may perish in like manner, and expressing the assurance that all that love him shall at last gloriously triumph. v. 28–31.

1. *Then sang Deborah and Barak.* Heb. ותשר דבורה וברק *vattâsar Deborâh u-Bârâk, then sang she, Deborah, and Barak.* The verb is in the fem. sing. in order to give the precedency to Deborah, as is also the case in the song of Miriam, Num.

people willingly offered themselves.

3 [d] Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes; I, *even* I, will sing unto the LORD; I will sing *praise* to the LORD God of Israel.

[d] Deut. 32. 1, 3. Ps. 2. 10.

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12. 1. It is not, perhaps, necessary to suppose that Deborah and Barak were the *only* singers on this occasion. The probability is, that it was composed by Deborah, and sung under her and Barak's direction, by the assembled hosts of Israel, or by a choir of priests and Levites, shortly after the victory. The phrase 'on that day,' does not necessarily restrict us to the precise day of the battle, but according to Heb. usage may imply simply 'about that time.'

2. *Praise ye the Lord.* Heb. ברכו יהוה *bâreku Yehovâh*, *bless ye the Lord;* i. e. by suitable ascriptions of praise and thanksgiving.——¶ *For the avenging of Israel.* The interpretation of the original phrase is attended with great difficulties. Without attempting to exhibit at length the various modes of rendering adopted by different commentators, it may be sufficient to remark, that the several ideas of *delivering*, of *avenging*, of *commanding and leading in war*, have had their respective advocates among them. We know of no guide to the true sense but that of prevailing usage, and even that is not easily ascertained. We believe, however, that it will be found by accurate analysis, that the leading idea of the verb פרע *pâra*, is *to free*, *to let loose*, *to let break away*, as the locks of hair, when the head-gear is taken off, or a licentious people, when the restraints of law and order are removed, and thence by natural derivation, *to make naked*, *to uncover*, and also *to exempt*, *to make one clear of.* In nearly every instance in which the word occurs, the idea of *loosing*, *getting*, or *setting free*, *exemption*, is someway involved, and perhaps the most correct rendering, in the present passage, would be, *For the freeing of freedoms*, or, *For the breaking away of emancipations*, i. e. for the successful efforts of the people to extricate themselves from the yoke of their oppressors, praise ye the Lord. The predominant import is that of *breaking away from bonds*, and this idea falls in very naturally with that of the parallel clause, viz. of offering themselves willingly, in order to effect their deliverance; and as the act of a people in asserting their freedom, can hardly be conceived of as separate from that of punishing their oppressors, it is probable that the sense of *avenging* has been in this way not unnaturally affixed by interpreters to the original term. The error, however, in our translation, is in referring directly to God, what is really represented as the acting of the people.——¶ *Of Israel.* Heb. בישראל *be-Yisraël*, *in Israel;* i. e. among the Israelites.

3. *Hear, O ye kings*, &c. The kings and princes here addressed *may* be understood of the princes of Israel, and then it is merely a declaration to them, that the prophetess is about to begin a song of triumph, in which it is implied that they should join. But as *kings* would seem to be too lofty a title to be applied to the leaders and elders of Israel, even in the elevated style of poetry, the pre-

4 LORD, [e] when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, [f] the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water.

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[e] Deut. 33. 2. Ps. 68. 7.

[f] 2 Sam. 22. 8. Ps. 68. 8. Isai. 64. 3. Hab. 3. 3, 10.

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ferable interpretation is to regard it as an address to the kings and potentates of Canaan, summoning their attention to the song of triumph about to be celebrated over them. The Greek version renders it, 'Hear, O kings, and give ear, O satraps;' the Chaldee, 'Attend, ye kings, who came to the war with Sisera, and ye rulers, who were with Jabin, king of Canaan;' which shows that they understood the word as referring to foreign princes, and thus the very same terms are used, Ps. 2. 2. The import of the latter clause is, that 'I, even I, a feeble woman, celebrate your overthrow,' and her leading drift is to admonish them, that however high and mighty they may deem themselves, yet there is one above them with whom it is folly to contend, and to whom they should be warned by Sisera's fate to submit without daring hereafter to offer insult to a people, whose cause sooner or later omnipotence would plead.

4. *When thou wentest out of Seir.* After declaring that Jehovah should be the object of her praise, the prophetess, by a sudden apostrophe, addresses him not as their present deliverer, but as the God who had formerly manifested his miraculous power in their behalf, while on the way from Egypt to the land of promise. By comparing the former signal displays of the divine majesty with the present, she would have her hearers infer that it was the same power that had *now* subdued their enemies, which prostrated them *then;* that it was the same goodness which had now restored to them the free enjoyment of their land, that had at first put them in possession of it. The phrases, 'when thou wentest out of Seir,' and 'when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom,' are merely an instance of poetic parallelism, Seir and Edom denoting the same country; that is to say, the mountainous region stretching from the southern extremity of the Dead Sea southwards towards the Elanitic gulf. Here, however, as well as Deut. 33. 2, it appears to be taken in a wider sense as including mount Sinai, the scene of the giving of the law, and of the grand and awful displays of the majesty of Jehovah by which it was accompanied, to which Deborah here alludes. Not that her description, in this and the ensuing verse, is to be confined to the sublime spectacle witnessed on that occasion. The scope of her language seems to be to portray, in the most glowing and poetic imagery, the *general course* of the divine manifestations in behalf of Israel, the convulsions of nature and the consternation of the inhabitants, while the Most High was conducting his people miraculously through the desert to put them in possession of their promised inheritance. These exhibitions of God's glory did, *as it were*, make the earth to tremble, the heavens to drop like snow before the sun, and the mountains to melt; and accordingly we

5 [g]The mountains melted from before the Lord, *even* [h]that Sinai from before the Lord God of Israel.

[g] Deut. 4. 11. Ps. 97. 5. [h] Ex. 19. 18.

6 In the days of [i]Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of [k]Jael, [l]the highways were un-

[i] ch. 3. 31. [k] ch. 4. 17.

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find the same general imagery employed in other portions of inspired song, as Ps. 18. 8, and 68. 8, and 144. 5; Deut. 33. 2; Is. 64. 1–3; Hab. 3. 6, in some of which the present description is adopted almost word for word. It seems, in fact, to have been a customary beginning of Hebrew songs of triumph.

5. *The mountains melted.* Heb. נזלו *nâzelu, flowed down;* as if melted by the flames, in which, we learn Ex. 19. 18, that the sacred mountain was enveloped, so that it ran down in streams. Others, from the general usage of the original, suppose that allusion is had to tremendous storms of rain, which poured down the mountain sides in such torrents, bearing soil, rocks, and trees with them, that the mountains themselves might be figuratively said to flow down. It does not appear very obvious, however, how this can apply to mount Sinai, where fire and not water was the predominant element. It is worthy of remark, in regard to this expression, that with the exception of the Vulgate, which has *diffluxerunt*, *flowed*, all the ancient versions take the original from another root (זלל *zâlal*, instead of נזל *nâzal*,) and render it *were shaken*, *agitated*, *made to tremble.* Thus the Gr., Chal., Arab., and Syr., and this rendering is confirmed by Is. 64. 1 3, 'that the mountains might *flow down;*' where the Heb. (נזלו *nâzōllu*) undoubtedly signifies *to quake*, though our English version, contrary to all authority, gives it the sense of *melting*. See Gesenius on the above roots.

6. *In the days of Shamgar.* After thus celebrating the majesty of Jehovah in his former appearances, the prophetess, in order to give her people a livelier sense of their deliverance, and excite them to greater thankfulness, turns to depict the forlorn and degraded state to which Israel had previously been reduced; their highways deserted; their villages depopulated; their cities blocked up; their country overrun with the enemies' soldiers; themselves disarmed and dispirited, helpless and hopeless, till it pleased God to look upon them with compassion, and raise up Deborah for a deliverer. ——¶ *In the days of Jael.* She is mentioned by way of honorable testimonial by the side of a distinguished man, and in connexion with an important epoch, because from her recent achievement, she no doubt at this time stood very conspicuous before the eyes of the nation. Still though these were illustrious characters, yet no complete deliverance was effected for Israel till Deborah arose.——¶ *The highways were unoccupied.* Heb. חדלו ארחות *hâdelu orâhoth, the highways ceased.* That is, ceased to be occupied; they were abandoned by travellers, on account of their being beset by plundering hordes of their enemies. The same idea is expressed Is. 33. 8, 'The highways lie waste, the way-faring

occupied,[l] and the travellers walked through by-ways.

7 *The inhabitants* of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose [m]a mother in Israel.

8 They [n]chose new gods; then *was* war in the gates: [o]was

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[l] Lev. 26. 22. 2 Chron. 15. 5. Isai. 33. 8. Lam. 1. 4, and 4. 18.

[m] Isai. 49. 23. [n] Deut. 32. 16. ch. 2. 12, 17. [o] So 1 Sam. 13. 19, 22. ch. 4. 3.

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man *ceaseth.*'——¶ *Travellers.* 'Heb. חלֹכי נתיבות *holekë nethiboth, walkers of paths.* The original for 'paths,' usually means an *elevated, beaten road.* Here it seems to designate the open public roads, in distinction from the obscure and *crooked by-ways* which travellers were now compelled to take.

7. The inhabitants of *the villages ceased.* Heb. חדלֹו פרזון *hâdelu perâzon, the village ceased;* col. sing. for plur. In other words, the villages were deserted. The tillers of the soil scattered in villages over the country were obliged to forsake their farms and houses, and seek shelter for themselves in walled cities and fortified places. Chald. 'the unwalled towns were desolate.' 'There are roads in these countries, but it is very easy to turn out of them, and go to a place by winding about over the lands, when that is thought safer. The account Bishop Pocock gives of the manner in which the Arab, under whose care he had put himself, conducted him to Jerusalem, illustrates this with pertinency, which his lordship tells us was by night, and not by the high-road, but through the fields: "and I observed," says he, "that he avoided as much as he could going near any village or encampment, and sometimes stood still, as I thought, to hearken." Just in that manner people were obliged to travel in Judea, in the days of Shamgar and Jael.' *Harmer.* It is proper to be remarked, however, that Gesenius and several other critics of distinction, render the original word by 'champions,' or 'chiefs,' instead of villages, and that too upon very probable grounds. The Gr. version also has δυνάτοι, *mighty men.* This agrees very well with the words that follow.——¶ *A mother in Israel.* A benefactress; so termed from her services towards her people. As a deliverer of his country is called the *father* of it, so Deborah is here called a *mother* in Israel.

8. *They chose new Gods.* Strange or foreign gods; that is, they addicted themselves to idolatry. They not only submitted to it when forced upon them, but they *chose* it. Compare Deut. 32. 17, 'They sacrificed unto devils, and not to God; to gods whom they knew not, *to new gods that came newly up*, whom your fathers knew not.' This was the procuring cause of all their trouble. They forsook God, and God forsook them.——¶ *Then was war in the gates.* Heb. אז לֹחם שערים *az la'hem sheârim, a besieging of the gates;* or, as Kimchi renders it, 'a besieger or assaulter of the gates.' Chal. 'the nations came against them and expelled them from their cities.' The evident implication is, that when they lapsed into idolatry they involved themselves in every species of calamity, and were harassed with wars within the precincts of their towns and cities. As the gates, moreover, were the

there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?

9 My heart *is* toward the governors of Israel that [p] offered themselves willingly among the people: Bless ye the LORD.

10 [q] Speak, ye [r] that ride on

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[p] ver. 2.

[q] Ps. 105. 2, and 145. 5. [r] ch. 10. 4, and 12. 14.

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places where their courts of judicature were held, the continual incursions of the enemy deprived the magistrate of the dignity, and the people of the benefit of government. There being no peace to him that went or him that came in, the stated administration of justice was effectually broken up.——¶ *Was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?* An interrogation strongly implying a negative. To such a state were they reduced that there was *scarcely* a shield or spear seen among 40,000 Israelites. The number specified is not to be considered as including the *whole* military force of Israel, but the speaker simply gives a round number, and by poetical amplification a very large one, among whom no arms were to be found; in order to indicate more strongly the destitution of the Israelites in this respect. From 1 Sam. 13. 19-22, some have inferred that their enemies had actually disarmed the subject tribes, and that it was to this that their destitution was owing. But this hypothesis is but little consonant with intrinsic probability, or with other circumstances alluded to in the narrative. Barak is said, ch. 4. 6, 10, to have taken 10,000 men with him to mount Tabor, and who will suppose that they went thither unprovided with arms? especially when we are informed, v. 15, 16, that the hosts of Sisera perished 'with the edge of the sword before Barak,' so there was not a man left. The expression of Deborah therefore is merely a poetic hyperbole.

9. *My heart is toward the governors,* &c. Heb. לחקקים *le'hokekim, the lawgivers.* After describing the bondage of Israel, and its effects upon the courage of the people, the prophetess, by a natural transition, repeats her exclamations of gratitude to the princes and the people, that they had at length risen and triumphed. Her heart was especially drawn out in sentiments of love and honor towards those heads of the tribes, who had so nobly come forward in the hour of need, and by their example aroused and stimulated their countrymen to throw off the yoke. They are called 'lawgivers,' not from their enacting new laws, which was never done in Israel, but from their giving sentence in causes that came before them, and administering justice generally.——¶ *Bless ye the Lord.* As it was the divine prompting that moved the leaders to the enterprise, she would not, in bestowing her commendations upon the instruments, lose sight of the Author of the blessing, and therefore calls upon the people at large to join her in a grateful song of praise.

10. *Speak.* Rather, Heb. שיחו *sihu, meditate,* i. e. rehearse, celebrate, a song of praise.——¶ *That ride on white asses.* Judea is a country but little favorable to the production of horses, instead of which, asses were anciently in general use. Of these such as were of a whitish color

white asses, [s]ye that sit in judgment, and walk by the way.

11 *They that are delivered* from the noise of archers in the places

[s] Ps. 107. 32.

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were probably the most rare and costly, and therefore were used only by eminent persons. Some have supposed that they were so called from the white garments, or caparisons spread over them; but it appears unnatural to ascribe the color of a covering to the creature that wears it. We do not call a man white or black, because he happens to be dressed in vestments of white or black cloth; neither did the Hebrews. The expression naturally suggests the color of the animal itself, not of its trappings, and this is confirmed by the reports of travellers. 'White asses, according to Morier, come from Arabia; their scarcity makes them valuable, and gives them consequence. The men of the law count it a dignity, and suited to their character, to ride on asses of this color. As the Hebrews always appeared in white garments at their public festivals and on days of rejoicing, or when the courts of justice were held; so they naturally preferred white asses, because the color suited the occasion, and because asses of this color being more rare and costly, were more coveted by the great and wealthy. The same view is taken of this question by Lewis, who says, the asses in Judea "were commonly of a red color; and therefore white asses were highly valued, and used by persons of superior note and quality."' *Paxton.* Compare ch. 12. 14. Gesenius remarks that the original term is not perhaps to be understood as signifying a pure white, but a light reddish color with white spots, as asses *entirely* white are rarely if ever found. The white color, it is well known, is highly prized by the Orientals, whether in asses, camels, or elephants, and such are usually the property of princes.——¶ *Ye that sit in judgment.* So rendered by several of the older versions, but the phrase in the original is exceedingly difficult of interpretation. Later commentators, with much plausibility, derive the word from a root signifying *to extend*, *to spread out*, and understand it of *carpets*, *coverings*, or *the large outer garments* of the Hebrews, which were frequently spread out and used for sleeping upon at night. Accordingly Prof. Robinson translates the clause, 'Ye that recline on splendid carpets.' But after all the researches of philologists, some doubt will still remain as to the true import of the original.——¶ *Ye that walk by the way.* Ye who can safely travel in the public highways, now no longer infested by prowling banditti. The allusion is perhaps to traffickers of various descriptions, or to the humbler classes, who were much upon the public roads, but who seldom rode; so that the poet's invocation is to *the nobles*, *the wealthy*, and *the poor*, or, in other words, to the whole nation, to join in the song of triumph. They were now, as the fruits of the recent victory, enjoying a happy security, directly the reverse of their former oppressed and calamitous condition, and nothing was more proper, than that they should celebrate in thankful strains the praises of their divine deliverer. It may be remark-of drawing water, there shall they rehearse the [t] righteous acts of the LORD, *even* the righteous acts *toward the inhabitants* of his villages in Israel: then shall

t 1 Sam. 12. 7. Ps. 145. 7.

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ed that the Syr. and Arab. versions render the two clauses by, 'Ye that sit at home, and ye that walk by the way.'

11. *From the noise of the archers in the places of drawing water.* Heb. מקול מחצצים בין משאבים *mikkol me'hatzim bĕn mashabbim*, *from the voice of the dividers at the watering-troughs.* It would be easy, but of little use, to heap together an immense variety of renderings, proposed by different expositors, of this very perplexing passage. The difficulty arises principally from the word מחצצים *me'hatzim*, translated 'archers,' which occurs only here, and of which lexicographers are unable to determine the exact root. If it be a denominative from חץ *'hëtz*, *an arrow*, its meaning here is undoubtedly 'archers;' but if, as most modern philologists contend, it comes from the verb חצץ, it has the import of *dividing*, although Gesenius says that חץ *an arrow*, comes from this root, and is so called from its *dividing* or *cleaving* the air. According to this interpretation, the מחצצים *me'hatzim* are either the victorious warriors returning laden with booty, and halting at the watering-places to *divide* the spoil with songs of rejoicing, or the shepherds who can now, with cheerful carols, securely drive their flocks and herds to water, *dividing*, *separating*, or *marshalling* them as they please. Which of these two senses is the correct one it is not perhaps possible absolutely to determine. Either will suit well the connexion, provided the original for 'from' be rendered, as it properly may, 'at,' 'for,' 'on account of.' The prophetess had just called upon all the people to join in a song, and she now declares the occasion; 'Praise the Lord for or on account of the voice, the joyful cry, of those who divide at the watering places.' It may be further remarked by way of illustration, of the words, that as wells were very scarce in every part of the East, robbers and banditti, generally took their stations near tanks, pools, and springs, in order that they might suddenly fall upon those who came to drink; and when the country was badly governed, annoyances of this kind were very frequent. 'In open, unprotected lands of the East, the watering places are at this day the scenes of continual conflict and oppression. To such places the necessity for water conducts different people, who cannot any where meet in peace. These parties of hostile tribes fall in with each other, and quarrel and fight; and thither the natives of the wilds resort to plunder the parties of travellers and merchants who come in search of water. In the deserts of Syria and Arabia, natives and strangers are thus annoyed near the wells, This therefore is the principal reason of war,—the neighborhoods of wells being the principal seats of war and depredation in those countries. Travellers also, knowing that such tribes are encamped near, or are likely to visit the wells, often dread to approach them, in the fear of being plundered, if not also killed. For this reason we have known parties

the people of the LORD go down to the gates.

12 [u] Awake, awake, Deborah; awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and [x] lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.

13 Then he made him that remaineth [y] have dominion over the nobles among the people:

[u] Ps. 57. 8. [x] Ps. 68. 18. [y] Ps. 49. 14.

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of travellers, that were reduced to almost the last extremity for want of water in the parched deserts, obliged to avoid the places where their wants might be satisfied, from having heard that parties of Arabs were encamped in the neighborhood; and we have heard of others who from the same cause were obliged to go one or two days' journey out of their way, to one watering place, in preference to another that lay directly in their way. No travellers, unless in great force, dare encamp near a well, however pleasant and desirable it might be, from the fear of disagreeable visitors. They water their cattle, and replenish their waterskins in all haste, and then go and encamp at a distance from any roads leading to the well. Dr. Shaw mentions a beautiful rill in Barbary, which is received into a large basin, called *Shrub we Krub*; that is, *Drink and away*, from the great danger of meeting there with robbers and assassins. With equal propriety, and for the same reason, almost every Oriental watering-place might be called *Shrub we Krub.' Pict. Bible.* The victory now gained put the whole country under their own government, and cleansed the land of these marauders. Instead of such danger and insecurity, Deborah here intimates that they may sit down unmolested at the places of drawing water, and there rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord; the land being now in peace, and order and good government everywhere restored.——¶ *Go down to the gates.* Shall repossess themselves of the cities and walled villages from which they had been expelled by their enemies; they shall henceforth have free access either in or out of the gates, as their occasions might require; and as it is well known that the gate was the place of judgment in the East, they should again resort in peace and safety to the stations where justice was administered.

12. *Awake, awake, Deborah,* &c. The prophetess here turns to herself and Barak, the leaders and heroes of the triumph, in a tone of animated appeal and excitation. She calls upon herself to dictate a strain descriptive of the preparation and the conflict; and on Barak to lead forth his captives and display them in triumph before his countrymen. That such appeals to one's self are very common in Hebrew poetry is obvious from Ps. 42. 6, 12, and 103. 1 and 5, and 104. 1, and elsewhere.——¶*Lead thy captivity captive.* Lead those captive who before held thee in captivity. Comp. Ps. 68. 19; Eph. 4. 8.

13. *Made him that remained,* &c. That is, then he (the Lord) made the dispirited remnant of the Israelites, who had survived the oppression of their enemies, to obtain the ascendency over the nobles or chieftains of the people of Canaan, and made me, who am but a feeble wo-

the LORD made me have dominion over the mighty.

14 [z] Out of Ephraim *was there* a root of them [a] against Amalek; after thee, Benjamin, among thy people; out of [b] Machir came down governors, and out of Zebulun they that handle the pen of the writer.

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[z] ch. 3. 27. [a] ch. 3. 13.

[b] Num. 32. 39, 40.

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man, to have dominion over the mighty.

14. *Out of Ephraim* was there *a root of them against Amalek.* The poetess begins here to enumerate and review the tribes which had joined the standard of Barak. In the account of this matter, ch. 4. 10, mention is made only of the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali, but from the tenor of the song it is obvious that several other tribes, on hearing of the exigency of their brethren, immediately raised a levy and volunteered to go to their assistance. For this ready and generous proffer of their services, Deborah pays to them the *first* tribute of her thanks. The opening sentence of her commendation quoted above is replete with difficulty. Without adverting to the various renderings which have been proposed both by Jewish and Christian interpreters, we shall give that which seems on the whole most probable. The clause is undoubtedly elliptical, and may be thus supplied;—'Out of Ephraim (came those) whose dwelling is in Amalek.' The original for 'root' we take to be a poetic expression for a *fixed, firmly established seat or dwelling*, just as nations taking up their abode in a land are said to be *planted* in it, to *take root* in it, as Is. 27. 6, 'He shall cause them that come of Jacob to *take root.*' Comp. Ps. 80. 8, 9; Job 5. 3. If it be asked how Ephraim could be said to have dwelt or taken root in Amalek, since it is well known that the Amalekites inhabited the country to the south of Palestine between mount Seir and Egypt, the answer is drawn from ch. 12. 15, where it is said that 'Abdon was buried in the land of Ephraim, *in the mount of the Amalekites.*' From this it is to be inferred that a colony of this people, who were related to the Kenites, had formerly migrated into the interior of the country, and maintained itself among the Israelites of the tribe of Ephraim. In this way it could be said, that the Ephraimites, whose *root*, i. e. foundation, dwelling place, was among the Amalekites, on the mountain of that name, came forth to the war.——¶ *After thee, Benjamin, among thy people.* Rather, 'After thee, (O Ephraim, came) Benjamin, among thy peoples,' i. e. thy forces, thy hosts. By a sudden change of persons, common to the poetic style, Ephraim is here addressed as present, and Benjamin, whose quota of men was probably small, is spoken of as being incorporated with it, instead of forming a distinct corps by itself.——¶ *Out of Machir came down governors.* Machir was the son of Manasseh, and the father of Gilead, Gen. 50. 23; Num. 27. 1, and is here put for the tribe of Manasseh, that is, the half of that tribe which dwelt on the west of Jordan. The original for 'governors,' (מחקקים *me'hokekim,*) is in effect the same with חקקים *'hokekim, lawgivers,* v. 9, and is to be

15 And the princes of Issachar *were* with Deborah; even Issachar, and also [c] Barak: he was sent on foot into the valley. For the divisions of Reuben

[c] ch. 4. 14.

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understood of military leaders, expert and valiant chieftains, who promptly took the field at the head of their troops.——¶ *Out of Zebulun they that handle the pen of the writer.* There is something peculiarly incongruous in the idea of *penmen* coming down to a battle, nor is the rendering in fact warranted by the original. The Heb. term for 'handle,' (משכים *meshokim,*) is the same with that occurring ch. 4. 6, respecting the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali, and which we there endeavored to show, signified to *draw* in the sense of *enlisting.* We take it in the same sense here; implying those, who, as the emissaries of Barak, succeeded in *drawing after them* recruits. As to the instrument employed on this occasion, though our translators have rendered the Heb. שבט *shëbet* by 'pen,' yet the word has no where else that signification throughout the Scriptures. Its genuine meaning is *a rod, staff,* or *wand,* and instead of the 'pen of the writer,' the correct version undoubtedly is, 'with the rod of the numberer.' A definite number of men (10,000) were by Deborah's orders, ch. 4. 6, to be levied from these two tribes, and the doing of this is described by a metaphor, taken from the custom of shepherds in numbering, separating, or selecting their sheep, by means of a rod besmeared with paint, with which they marked every fifth, tenth, or twentieth, as the case might be, as they came out of the outlet of their enclosure. See the process more particularly described in the note on Lev. 27. 32.

15. *The princes of Issachar were with Deborah.* Or, Heb. ושרי ביששכר עם דברה *vesârë be-Yissâkâr im Deborah, my princes in Issachar were with Deborah.* She calls them 'my princes,' from the grateful esteem with which their services had inspired her.——¶ *Even Issachar, and also Barak.* Rather, Heb. ויששכר כן ברק *ve-Yissâkâr kën Bârâk, and Issachar in like manner as Barak;* i. e. Issachar was equally prompt, ardent, and valiant in the good cause; he marched forth with equal alacrity.——¶ *Was sent on foot into the valley.* Heb. שלח ברגליו *shulla'h beraglâv, was sent with his feet.* See Note on ch. 4. 10, 14. The meaning we suppose to be that, when Barak was ordered to charge down the declivity of Tabor towards the valley, the men of Issachar followed with as much promptitude, as if all their feet had pertained to their leader's body. It may be remarked that the original word, rendered 'valley,' signifies also a low level plain, and thus the known topography of the place requires that it should be rendered here. They descended from mount Tabor into the plain of Esdraelon.—At this point a transition is made to a new theme in the inspired song; viz. a rebuke of the recreant tribes, who refused to join their brethren and flock to the standard of Barak; and here v. 16 should properly begin.——¶ *For the divisions of Reuben.* Heb. לפלגות *liphlaggoth, in or among the divisions.* It is impossible to speak with confidence of the exact import

*there were* great thoughts of heart.

16 Why abodest thou [d] among the sheep-folds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? For

[d] Num. 32. 1.

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of the word here rendered 'divisions.' It is perhaps designedly left ambiguous, as is not unusual with Scripture phrases, in order that it may be taken in greater latitude and fulness of meaning, and include the various senses of which it is susceptible. By some it is understood of the *local division* of Reuben from the rest of the tribes by the Jordan and other rivers; by others, of the *classes* or *ranks* into which the tribe was divided; and by others still, of the *divided counsels*, the *conflicting opinions*, of the Reubenites respecting the propriety of taking up arms on the occasion. The root from which the original is derived, signifies *to divide*, *to cleave*, and the present term occurs Job 20. 17, in the sense of *water-courses*, or *streams* flowing in *channels*. The most probable interpretation, therefore, if we mistake not, is that of Schnurrer and others, who by the 'divisions of Reuben,' understand the 'streams of Reuben;' i. e. the well-watered country of Reuben, a region fertilized by numerous creeks and small rivers. It will be recollected that Reuben dwelt on the east of Jordan and the Dead Sea, from the river Arnon northwards, and possessed part of the plain of the Jordan which, Gen. 12. 10, was 'every where *well watered*;' a region expressly celebrated, Num 32. 1, for its rich pasturage, which necessarily implies the presence of springs and streams. After all, if any one is inclined to construe the phrase in a *pregnant* sense, as comprising all the above senses of 'divisions,' we have no objections to urge against it, nor do we hesitate to believe that a similar mode of solving Scripture difficulties is in many instances the true one.——¶ *Great thoughts of heart.* The original for 'thoughts,' signifies *resolvings*, *decisions*, *decrees*, and the purport of the clause perhaps is, that the Reubenites at first *heroically resolved* to join their countrymen, but afterwards recanted their purpose, and meanly stayed at home. This conduct the prophetess first describes in a tone of apparent praise, which by a poetical artifice is converted into an ironical and cutting sarcasm. She intimates that their original resolution and purpose was magnanimous; inquires why it was not fulfilled; why they preferred to remain at home and listen to the piping of the herdsmen? She then repeats in effect her first sentence of approbation; but in the ensuing verse, by the change of a single letter, (חקר for חקק *revolvings* for *resolvings*) she pronounces their noble *resolution* to have been mere *empty deliberation*, amounting to nothing.

16. *Why abodest thou among the sheep-folds?* Bishop Horsley renders the original by 'hillocks,' instead of 'sheep-folds,' and we are satisfied that he, of all other interpreters, has come nearest to the genuine scope of the speaker. He remarks, that the noun משפתים *mishphetayim*, is from the root שפה *shâphâh*, *to stick up*, *to be prominent*, and it is in the dual form. Hence the substantive may signify any gibbosity or prominence. It is used in Jacob's last words, to

the divisions of Reuben *there were* great searchings of heart.

17 [e] Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships? [f] Asher continued on the sea-shore, and abode in his breaches.

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[e] See Josh. 13. 25, 31.

[f] Josh. 19. 29, 31.

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signify the two panniers of a laden ass lying down, and those panniers are the ridges of hills which were the boundaries of his territories. In like manner, we think, it is to be taken here to signify 'hills in double parallel ridges.' Reuben is asked why he abode between משפתים *mishphetayim,* to hear the bleatings of the flocks. And where shall any one abide to hear the bleatings of the flocks, but among hills, where flocks range? See also Note on Gen. 49. 14. It is still possible that there may have been such a similarity in form between the stalls, or ranges of the Syrian folds or pinfolds for flocks, and parallel ranges of hills, as to render the same term applicable to both, so that the present translation does not err widely from the truth. But the construction of Horsley, given above, we think decidedly preferable to any other.——¶ *To hear the bleatings of the flocks.* Heb. שרקות עדרים *sherikoth adârim, the whistlings or pipings of the flock;* i. e. of the shepherds who play on the pipe while guarding their flocks.——¶ *Great searchings of heart.* That is, great deliberations or consultations, but no result. They were forward in counsel and debate, but not in action; a severe and sarcastic irony.

17. *Gilead abode beyond Jordan.* That is, the Gadites, who possessed part of Gilead, Josh. 13. 24, 25. Perhaps a part of the half tribe of Manasseh is included under the term. The verb שכן *shâkan, to abide, to tabernacle*, necessarily here implies *to dwell at ease, quietly*, as Ps. 55. 6, 'O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and *be at rest*, (Heb. אשכן *eshkōn, dwell quietly.*) ——¶ *Why did Dan remain in ships?* Why was Dan so much intent upon his ships and merchandize? This was one of the maritime tribes. Its limits included the haven of Joppa (Jaffa,) and also the coast farther south. But Zebulun was also 'a haven for ships,' a seafaring tribe, and yet was forward and active in this expedition.——¶ *Asher continued on the sea-shore.* The same reproach is here brought against Asher, that he remained on his coasts. His lot extended along the Mediterranean, contiguous to Zebulun and Naphtali, so that if disposed he might easily have succored his brethren. But he also had an excuse for staying at home. The original חוף *'huph, shore*, comes from חפף *'hâphaph, to wear away*, and is applied to a *coast*, inasmuch as this is continually *wearing away* by the action of the water. ——¶ *Abode in his breaches.* Heb. מפרצים *miphrâtzim, rents, ruptures, fissures*, from פרץ *pâratz, to rend*, implying probably the *bays, inlets*, and *havens*, lying along a rugged and broken coast. The celebrated harbor of Acco or Ptolemais (Acre) lay in the territory of Asher. Achzib also and Tyre are mentioned as falling within the limits of this tribe, Josh. 19. 29. The Chal. paraphrase gives a different turn to this clause;

18 [g]Zebulun and Naphtali *were* a people *that* jeoparded their lives unto the death in the high places of the field.

19 The kings came *and* fought, then fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo; [h]they took no gain of money.

[g] ch. 4. 10. [h] ch. 4. 16. Ps. 44. 12. See ver. 30.

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—'The house of Asher, on the margin of the sea, dwelt in the *broken down cities of the Gentiles*, which they rebuilt and inhabited.' The above rendering, however, is to be preferred.

18. *Jeoparded their lives unto the death.* Heb. חרף *'hërëph, despised, reproached*, or *contemned;* i. e. they rushed fearless upon danger and death. These tribes, from being the more immediate sufferers from Jabin's oppression, were, doubtless, the most eager to throw off the yoke of bondage, and would naturally rise in greater numbers and exhibit a more determined valor.——¶ *In the high places of the field.* Heb. מרומי שדה *meromë sâdëh, the heights of the field.* Either spoken, in reference to mount Tabor, on which the army of Israel at first encamped, or poetically taken for the *most dangerous places* of the field.

19. *The kings came and fought.* The poetess now proceeds to describe the battle. In the preceding chapter mention is made of a single king only, Jabin, as coming against Israel, but, from the use of the plural here, and from the probabilities of the case, it is to be inferred that other allied kings took the field with Sisera. We are expressly informed, Josh. 11. 10, that Hazor, where Jabin reigned, was 'before-time the head' of numerous petty principalities, and these, it may be supposed, were confederate with him on this occasion. Yet it is possible that, in the lofty style of poetry, 'kings' here may be simply equivalent to warlike leaders and champions, the heroes and potent personages at the head of the Canaanitish forces.——¶ *In Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo.* These two places, which are usually mentioned together, lay within the limits of the plain of Esdraelon, and in the immediate vicinity of the river Kishon. Indeed, it is scarcely to be questioned that by the 'waters of Megiddo,' is to be understood the stream Kishon, in that part of its course.——¶ *They took no gain of money.* They obtained no spoil or booty; they were utterly disappointed in their expectations. The original, if rendered literally, is very emphatic; 'not a piece, coin, or particle of silver did they take.' Schmid, however, among the most acute and judicious of commentators, understands the words of the ardor and overweening confidence with which the Canaanites fought. They entered the field so sanguine of success, they *resolved not to take* the least ransom for the Israelites, either for life or liberty. Thinking it possible that Barak might, on seeing the formidable power arrayed against him, repent of his undertaking and wish to purchase peace by money; these words, according to the critic above mentioned, express their determination not to listen for a moment to any terms of treaty, but to cut them all off without mercy. This construction does no violence to the original, and is liable to no seri-

20 [i] They fought from heaven; [k] the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.

21 [l] The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river,

ous objection. Gr. 'they took no gift of silver.' Chal. 'they willed not riches of silver;' i. e. they determined to reject or refuse the most tempting bribes. Thus Is. 13. 17, 'Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which *shall not regard silver;* and as for gold, *they shall not delight in it;*' i. e. they shall not be prevailed upon to spare, by the prospect of fee or reward.

20. *They fought from heaven.* As the expression is indefinite, it may be considered as equivalent to saying, that a supernatural power was engaged against them; they had to contend not only with foes on earth, but with foes in heaven. Omnipotence armed the elements against them. A parallel idea is expressed in the words that follow.——¶ *The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.* Or, Heb. הכוכבים ממסלותם *hakkokâbim mimmesolathâm, the stars from their orbits fought,* &c., lit. 'from their elevations, their exaltations, their highways.' Chal. 'from the place where the stars go forth, war was waged against Sisera.' Probably nothing more than a highly rhetorical or poetical expression for *the adverse influence of the atmospheric elements,* the rains, winds, thunders, and lightnings, which, from ch. 4. 15, appear to have been supernaturally excited on this occasion. See the extract from Josephus, Note on ch. 4. 15. The stars are here the *host of heaven,* and this is but another phrase for *heaven itself;* the *heavens* fought against Sisera.

21. *Kishon.* This river takes its rise in the valley of Jezreel, near the foot of mount Tabor, and after running westward, with a great variety of turnings and windings, through the plain of Esdraelon, falls into the Mediterranean at the south-east corner of the bay of Acre. 'In travelling,' says Shaw, 'under the south-east brow of Carmel, I had an opportunity of seeing the sources of the river Kishon, three or four of which lie within less than a furlong of each other, and are called "Ras el Kishon," or, *the head of the Kishon.* These alone, without the lesser contributions nearer the sea, discharge water enough to form a river half as big as the Isis. During likewise the rainy season, all the water which falls on the eastern side of the mountain, or upon the rising ground to the southward, empties itself into it in a number of torrents, at which conjunctures it *overflows its banks, acquires a wonderful rapidity, and carries all before it.*' When Maundrell crossed this stream on his way to Jerusalem, its waters were low and inconsiderable; but in passing along the side of the plain, he observed the tracts of many tributary rivulets falling down into it from the mountains, by which it must be greatly swelled in the rainy season. At the time of the battle here described, it was undoubtedly in this condition—swollen to a deep and impetuous torrent, sweeping away every thing within its reach.——¶ *That ancient river.* The reason of this epithet is not obvious. The Gr. renders it, 'the stream of the

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[i] See Josh. 10, 11. Ps. 77. 17, 18. [k] ch. 4. 15. [l] ch. 4. 7.

the river Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength.

22 Then were the horse-hoofs broken by the means of the prancings, the prancings of their mighty ones.

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ancients, or of antiquities.' The Chal. 'the river in which happened signs and great deeds to Israel from ancient times.' The root קדם *kĕdem*, properly implies the idea *of precedency*, or *priority*, whether in point of time or place, and hence its derivatives obtain the sense of either 'antiquity,' or 'the east,' which is always spoken of as lying *before* all other countries. 'The river of antiquities,' is undoubtedly the most exact rendering, and the import may be that it was a river *about which the divine counsels were exercised of old;* it was a stream of *ancient designation*, one which God designed to make illustrious by this, and, perhaps, other similar events; for the plain of Esdraelon, through which it runs, is the most famous battle-ground of the whole territory of Palestine. It was the scene of the conflict of Gideon and the Midianites, of Saul and the Philistines, of the Israelites and the Syrians, 1 Kings 20. 26, and of Josiah and the Egyptians. It has in fact been a chosen place for encampment, in every contest carried on in the Holy Land, from the days of Nebuchadnezzar to the time of the Crusaders, and thence down to that of the modern Napoleon, who here sustained the attack of the whole Syrian army. 'Jews, Gentiles, Saracens, Egyptians, Persians, Druses, Turks, Arabs, Christian Crusaders, and anti-christian Frenchmen—warriors out of every nation under heaven, have pitched their tents in the plain of Esdraelon, and have beheld the various banners of their nations wet with the dews of Tabor and Hermon.' It may also be remarked, that if the predicted 'battle of Armageddon,' Rev. 16. 16, denote a *literal* conflict, destined hereafter to take place, there is every probability that this is to be its scene; for here lies Megiddo, to which allusion is had in the name 'Armageddon,' and we are, in fact, strongly inclined to believe that name is formed by contraction and a slight change of letters, particularly of *r* for *l*, which is common in the East, from the Heb. אל מי מגדר *al-me-Megiddo*, *waters of Megiddo*, v. 19, which we have there shown to be but another appellation of this very river. We see, therefore, with how much propriety the Kishon is called the 'ancient,' i. e. *the ordained*, *the destined*, *the designated river;* the river intended, in the purposes of heaven, to be signalized by a series of remarkable events.——¶ *Thou hast trodden down strength.* That is, thou hast vanquished the strong and mighty; a strain of exultation spoken, perhaps, in the person of all Israel, in view of the glorious victory achieved.

22. *The horse-hoofs broken.* Anciently horses were not shod; nor are they at the present day in some parts of the East. The flight was so rapid, that the hoofs of their horses were splintered, battered, and broken by the roughness of the roads.——¶ *By the means of their prancings.* Or, Heb. דהרות *da'haroth*, *of their scamperings.* From ch. 4. 16, it appears that the Canaanites fled with the utmost precipitation.——¶ *Of*

23 Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the LORD, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, [m] because they came not to the help [n] of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty.

24 Blessed above women shall [o] Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, [p] blessed shall she be above women in the tent.

m ch. 21. 9, 10. Neh. 3. 5. n 1 Sam. 17. 47, and 18. 17, and 25. 28. o ch. 4. 17. p Luke 1. 28.

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*their mighty ones.* Of their best and strongest horses. The original (אברים *abbirim*,) is thus applied Jer. 8. 16, 'The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan; the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his *strong ones.*' Ch. 47. 3, 'At the noise of the stamping of his *strong horses.*'

23. *Curse ye Meroz.* The prophetess here turns abruptly to curse the inhabitants of Meroz; a place probably of some note at that time, but of which no trace whatever now remains. The effect of the curse, like that pronounced upon Amalek, Ex. 17. 14, seems to have 'blotted out the remembrance' of its history and its site. We may suppose it to have been a city lying near the scene of action, and that the inhabitants, having an opportunity to cut off the Canaanites in their flight, neglected to improve it, or in some other way withheld their services on the occasion.——¶ *Said the angel of the Lord.* The Angel-Jehovah, before spoken of, ch. 2. 1. The scope of the words is to intimate that the malediction proceeded not from her own private feelings of ill will or resentment, but was prompted by a divine impulse. It was Jehovah that commanded the curse. She would not otherwise have interrupted her strains of thanksgiving, by the utterance of so fearful a judgment.——¶ *Curse ye bitterly.* Heb. ארו ארור *ōru arōr*, *curse with cursing.* Use the most awful execrations.——¶ *Came not to the help of the Lord.* To the help of the Lord's people; for he takes what is done to his people, as done to himself; and what is withheld from them as withheld from himself. The Lord needed not their help; as the event showed that he could accomplish the work without them; nor does omnipotence ever really *need* the services of any of his creatures. But he is pleased to allow them the privilege of being employed as co-workers together with him, and when a crisis arrives in which it is in effect proclaimed, 'Who is on the Lord's side?' it is at our peril that we presume to stand upon neutral ground, and refuse to come up to the help of the Lord.

24. *Blessed above women*, &c. That is, she shall be praised and celebrated above women. She shall be deemed worthy of the most exalted eulogy for her heroic conduct; all the Israelitish women shall glory in her. This is in marked contrast with the foregoing curse of Meroz. The spirit of prophecy delights to turn from the language of displeasure and rebuke to that of commendation and praise.——¶ *Blessed—above women in the tent.* Or, as Geddes translates it, 'tent-inhabiting women.' She shall bear the palm above all women of the same class or character with herself, i. e. the women of those tribes that dwell only in tents. The words are evidently applied to the wife of a

25 [q]He asked water, *and* she gave *him* milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish.

26 [r]She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workmen's hammer; and with the hammer she smote Sisera,

[q] ch. 4. 19. [r] ch. 4. 21.

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wandering *nomad*, who had no fixed place of residence, and it is highly probable that such were the habits of the Kenites, in contradistinction from the more settled mode of life of the Israelites.

25. *She brought forth butter.* The original חמאה *hemâh*, here rendered 'butter,' undoubtedly implies something *liquid.* It would perhaps be better translated *cream*, or rather *curdled milk.* 'Sisera complained of thirst, and asked a little water to quench it,' a purpose to which butter is but little adapted. Mr. Harmer indeed urges the same objection to cream, which, he contends, few people would think a very proper beverage for one that was extremely thirsty; and concludes that it must have been buttermilk which Jael, who had just been churning, gave to Sisera. But the opinion of Dr. Russell is preferable, that the *hemah* of the Scriptures is probably the same as the *haymak* of the Arabs, which is not, as Harmer supposed, simple cream, but cream produced by simmering fresh sheep's milk for some hours over a slow fire. It could not be butter newly churned, which Jael presented to Sisera, because the Arab butter is apt to be foul, and is commonly passed through a strainer before it is used; and Russell declares, he never saw butter offered to a stranger, but always *haymak:* nor did he ever observe the Orientals drink buttermilk, but always *leban*, which is coagulated sour milk, diluted with water. It was *leban*, therefore, which Pocock mistook for buttermilk, with which the Arabs treated him in the holy land. A similar conclusion may be drawn concerning the butter and milk which the wife of Heber presented to Sisera; they were forced cream or *haymak*, and *leban*, or coagulated sour milk diluted with water, which is a common and refreshing beverage in those sultry regions.' *Paxton.*——¶*In a lordly dish.* Heb. 'in a bowl of the mighty, of the nobles.' That is, such as nobles use; a rich, costly, or princely bowl; one with which a person would entertain the most honorable guests. Though it is scarcely supposable that articles of this costly description were common in the tents of nomade tribes, yet in the present case the family of Heber may have possessed, from their ancestors, a sumptuous article of the kind, which Jael would naturally bring forth on the occasion of a visit from so distinguished a personage. See 'Illustrations of the Scriptures,' p. 137.

26. *She put her hand.* Her left hand, as appears from the nature of the case and from the mention of the *right* in the ensuing clause.——*With the hammer she smote Sisera.* The words 'with the hammer' ought properly to have been printed in Italics, as they do not occur in the original, although it is true that the Heb. verb for 'smite' does often, perhaps generally, convey the idea of *smiting with a hammer*, for which reason our translators have rendered in the margin, 'she hammered Sisera.' Yet in

she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temples.

27 At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell: where he bowed, there he fell down dead.

28 The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice, Why is his chariot *so* long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots?

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v. 22 of this chapter it is applied to the *beating* or *striking* of the horses' hoofs against the ground. At the time, however, when our translation was made, the force of many Heb. words was not so clearly ascertained as at the present.——¶ *She smote off his head.* Rather, Heb. מחקה ראשו *mâhakah rosho*, *she violently smote, she crushed his head.* That his head was actually severed from his body there is no good reason to believe.——¶ *When she pierced*, &c. Or, Heb. ומחצה *umâhalzah*, *and she pierced*, &c. The leading idea of the original word is *to beat down, to depress*, as appears from its use, Ps. 68. 24 and 110. 6; Deut. 33. 11. According to the rendering of our translators it is entirely synonymous with the ensuing term, 'stricken through.' But this we believe to be unwarranted. The first undoubtedly implies the *beating down, the indenting* of the side of Sisera's head which was exposed to the stroke, the other, *the transfixing, the perforating* of his temples, by the tent-pin. The words intimate a gradation in the act, each expression rising in intensity upon the preceding.

27. *At her feet he bowed*, &c. Heb. בין רגליה כרע נפל *bën raglëyâh kârâ nâphal*, *between her feet he bowed or sunk down, he fell.* He probably made some struggles after receiving the blow, and as we may suppose him to have been lying on a bed, or divan, elevated somewhat above the floor, he would naturally fall upon the latter. The several kindred words appear to be merely a poetic amplification of the circumstances of his death. See a similar phraseology, Ps. 20. 6, 'They are *brought down and fallen* (כרעו ונפלו).'

28. *The mother of Sisera looked out*, &c. By an abrupt but beautiful transition, the mother of Sisera is now introduced as looking from her lattice, confidently expecting her son's victorious return, ostentatiously reckoning upon the spoil. 'In this,' says Prof. Robinson, 'is shown the deep insight into human nature which the sacred writer possessed, an insight especially into the frivolity of the Oriental female character. Her consolation springs, not from the hope of his triumphant return as a warrior and conqueror, but arises from the slaves, the many-colored garments, the splendid ornaments and attire which will fall to his share. In the mouth of the exulting Hebrew poetess, this is a burst of keen and scoffing irony against a foe who never dreamed of a defeat, and awaited only the spoils of victory.'——¶ *Cried through the lattice.* The windows of eastern houses generally open into interior private courts, with the exception sometimes of a *latticed* window or balcony towards the street. At such an one the mother of Sisera is here represented as standing and looking out.——¶ *Why is his chariot so long in coming?* Heb. מדוע בשש

29 Her wise ladies answered her, yea, she returned answer to herself,

30 [s]Have they not sped? have they *not* divided the prey? to every man a damsel *or* two; to Sisera a prey of divers colors, a prey of divers colors of needle-work, of divers colors of needle-work on both sides, *meet* for the necks of *them that take* the spoil?

31 [t]So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD: but *let* them

[s] Ex. 15. 9.

[t] Ps. 83. 9, 10.

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רכבו לבוא *maddua boshĕsh rikbo lâbo, why does his chariot shame* (us) *in coming?* i. e. why does it so linger beyond expectation and almost beyond endurance? The relation between the ideas of *delay* and *shame*, in certain Hebrew terms, is very peculiar. See Note on ch. 3. 25.

29. *Her wise ladies.* The noble female attendants, the matrons of her court or suite. The epithet 'wise,' perhaps, has reference to their sagacity or shrewdness in assigning reasons for Sisera's delay.

30. *Have they not sped.* Heb. הלא ימצאו *halo yimtzeu, have they not found;* i. e. have they not succeeded in obtaining the object of their desires?——¶ *To every man a damsel or two.* Heb. לראש גבר *lerosh gëber, to the head of a man;* an idiom peculiar to the original, wherever the idea of *enumeration* or *distribution* is involved. One would have thought that ladies, who had any just conception of the honor of their sex, would have found other subjects of felicitation than this. But the hint serves as a faithful index of the degradation of woman in all heathen lands, especially in the East.——¶ *A prey of divers colors of needle-work.* Embroidery and rich dresses were reckoned the most valuable parts of the spoil of conquered foes. It was probably the beauty and richness of the Babylonish garment, that first tempted Achan to secrete the spoil that cost him his life. It was also probably from the high value put upon this species of spoil, that David, 2 Sam. 1. 24, calls upon the daughters of Israel to join with him in lamenting the death of Saul, 'who clothed them in scarlet, and with other delights; who put on ornaments of gold upon their apparel.'——¶ *For the necks of* them that take *the spoil.* Heb. לצוארי שלל *letzavverë shâlâl, for the necks of the prey.* The ellipsis is perhaps well supplied in our translation, though some critics, instead of taking 'prey' figuratively for *persons seizing the prey*, understand it of captured animals, which they suppose to have been usually led in triumph, decorated with ornaments and trappings upon their necks. In this sense, however, it might, as Prof. Robinson suggests, be better referred to the decorations of the female slaves.

31. *So let all thine enemies perish.* The prophetess, instead of saying in express terms that the hopes of Sisera's mother were doomed to sad disappointment, bursts forth into an abrupt apostrophe, which *implies* this in a very vivid and forcible manner; viz. an invocation of *like* destruction upon all the enemies of Jehovah. The particle 'so' refers, not to what is *expressed*, but to what is thus *implied*, the frustrated hopes

that love him *be* [u]as the sun [x]when he goeth forth in his might. And the land had rest forty years.

u 2 Sam. 23. 4. x Ps. 19. 5.

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and bitter wailings of the mother and her attendants. This highly poetical mode of concluding the song, gives a gracefulness and effect to the whole which can scarcely be surpassed. In remarking practically on the prayer of Deborah, it is to be observed, that imprecations of evil, when personal and vindictive, are contrary to the mind of God; but when uttered as denunciations of God's determined purposes against his enemies, they are not unsuited to the most holy character. In this light are many of the Psalms of David to be viewed; and even Paul could say, 'If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema-maranatha.' 'Though our enemies,' says Henry, 'are to be prayed *for*, God's enemies, as such, are to be prayed *against;* and when we see some of God's enemies remarkably humbled and brought down, that is an encouragement to us to pray for the downfall of all the rest.' Thus are Deborah's words to be interpreted. Being prompted by the spirit of inspiration, they are to be regarded not only as an imprecation, but also as a prediction; a prediction which shall assuredly be accomplished in its season upon all that continue to withstand omnipotence. ——¶*Let them that love him be as the sun*, &c. These words require simply a practical exposition. They intimate the true distinction between the enemies and the friends of God. The latter are characterized as those that *love* him. If between *men* we could admit a medium between love and hatred, we can by no means admit of it between God and his creatures. Indifference towards God would be constructive enmity. Those only who love him can be numbered among his friends. In behalf of these the prophetess prays that they may be as 'the sun when he goeth forth in his might.' Under this beautiful image she prays, (1) That they may shine with ever-increasing splendor. The sun in its early dawn casts but a feeble light upon the world; but soon proceeds to irradiate the whole horizon, and to burst in full lustre upon those who were a little while before immersed in darkness. Thus the goings-forth of the devoted friends and servants of the Most High, diffuse at first but an indistinct and doubtful gleam; but through the tender mercy of God they advance, and their light shines brighter and brighter to the perfect day. (2) That they may diffuse benefits wheresoever they go. The sun is the fountain of light and life to the whole terraqueous sphere. If we look at the places where his genial beams for months together never shine, the whole face of nature wears the appearance of desolation and death; and nothing but the return of his kindly influences restores her to life. Thus in countries where the friends of God are not found, the whole population is in a state of spiritual and moral death. But in *their* light, light is seen, and from them is spread abroad a vital influence which wakes up all around them to new life and power. Let us

## CHAPTER VI.

AND the children of Israel[a] did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand [b]of Midian seven years.

2 And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: *and*

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[a] ch. 2. 19.

[b] Hab. 3. 7.

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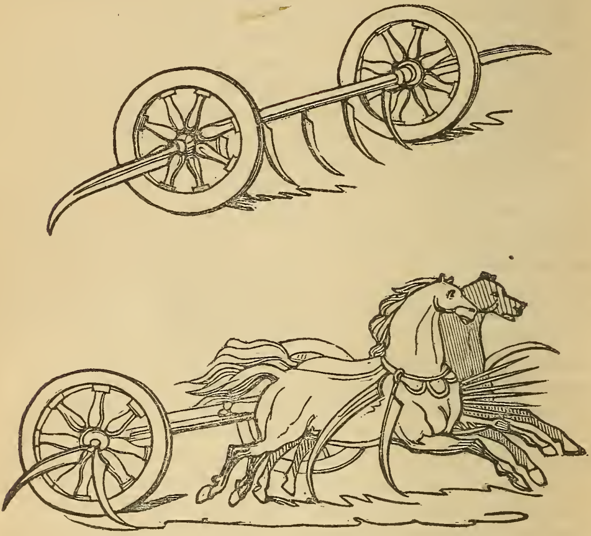
seriously inquire to which of these classes we belong; for however confounded now, there will be an awful difference between them ere long; the one arising to everlasting shame and contempt, the other shining forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father.



ANCIENT WAR-CHARIOTS.

## CHAPTER VI.

1. *Did evil in the sight of the Lord.* After the expiration of the forty years of rest above mentioned, ch. 5. 31. Their new defection subjects them, as a matter of course, to new judgments. With the froward, God will show himself froward, and will walk contrary to those that walk contrary to him.——¶ *Into the hand of Midian.* Of the Midianites; the usual collect. sing. for the plural. A great portion of this race had been cut off by Moses about 200 years before, Num. 31. 1–18, but in the mean time they had recovered themselves, those that escaped to other regions having returned, and

because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them [c]the dens which *are* in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds.

3 And *so* it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites

[c] 1 Sam. 13. 6. Heb. 11. 38.

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these with the remnant that remained having rapidly increased and acquired power, till they became too strong for their sin-weakened neighbors, the Israelites. Instigated probably by resentment, they joined the Amalekites in order to retaliate upon their ancient conquerors. They inhabited the eastern borders of the Red Sea, having Arnon for their capital.

2. *The hand of Midian prevailed against Israel.* Heb. תעז יד מדין על ישראל *tââz yad Midyân al Yisrâël, the hand of Midian was strong upon Israel;* indicating not merely the commencement, but the continuance and the highest degree of oppression. ——¶*Made them the dens*, &c. That is, prepared, fitted up as residences the caves and dens of the mountains. They did not make them *de novo*, in the sense of *cutting out*, *excavating*, or *constructing* them, for it is said they were *already* in the mountains, but they so *worked upon* them as to adapt them for dwelling-places and strongholds against the assaults of their enemies. Shaw says that a great way on each side of Joppa, on the sea-coast, there is a range of mountains and precipices; and that in these high situations are generally found the dens, the holes, or caves, which are so frequently mentioned in Scripture, and which were formerly the lonesome retreats of the distressed Israelites. Nothing can give a more vivid impression of the sufferings to which the Israelites were now reduced. Not daring to reside in the plain country they were obliged to betake themselves to the most retired holds and fastnesses which their mountainous territory afforded. Josephus thus describes this period of their history;—'Now when Barak and Deborah were dead, whose deaths happened about the same time; afterwards the Midianites called the Amalekites and Arabians to their assistance, and made war against the Israelites, and were too hard for those that fought against them; and when they had burnt the fruits of the earth, they carried off the prey. Now when they had done this for three years, the multitude of the Israelites retired to the mountains, and forsook the plain country. They also made themselves hollows under ground, and caverns, and preserved therein whatsoever had escaped their enemies; for the Midianites made expeditions in harvest-time, but permitted them to plough the land in winter, so that when the others had taken pains, they might have fruits for them to carry away.' J. Antiq. B. V. ch. 6. § 1. See Note on Gen. 19. 30. They who abuse God's gifts in prodigality and luxury, often live, as a just punishment, to feel the want of them in hunger and nakedness.

3. *When Israel had sown*, &c. The Midianites were principally wandering herdsmen, that is, just such a people as the Bedouin Arabs of the present day. Consequently the details of this oppression may be illustrated, from what travellers relate of the modern customs of these roving

came up, and [d] the Amalekites, [e] and the children of the east, even they came up against them:

4 And they encamped against them, and [f] destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza; and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass.

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[d] ch. 3. 13. [e] Gen. 29. 1. ch. 7. 12, and 8. 10. 1 Kings 4. 30. Job 1. 3.

[f] Lev. 26. 16. Deut. 28. 30, 33, 51. Mic. 6. 15.

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and plundering tribes. It may be stated as a maxim, that whenever the nomade is the master of the cultivator, the impoverishment and ultimate ruin of the latter are inevitable. The Bedouin Arabs come up from their deserts in the spring and perhaps remain through the summer, in the territories of those cultivators who are so unfortunate as to lie at their mercy. If there is not an established understanding between the tillers of the soil and the nomades, as to the tribute which the former are to pay for exemption, the Bedouins encamp and pasture their cattle in the cultivated grounds, after securing such corn and other vegetable productions as they may see fit to appropriate for their own use. Thus the 'increase of the earth is destroyed,' and no 'sustenance left' to reward the labor and patience bestowed upon its production.——¶ *The children of the east.* Various mixed tribes of the Arabians, Ishmaelites, Moabites, and Ammonites inhabiting the regions which lay to the east and southeast of Palestine. They were the descendants of Abraham by Keturah. See more respecting them, ch. 8. 10, 11. Gen. 29. 1; Job 1. 3; Ezek. 25. 4.——¶ *Came up against them.* The effects of these marauding expeditions are expressly stated in the next verse.

4. *And they encamped.* This is not to be understood precisely in the sense of a military encampment, which is generally a station occupied but for a very short time. The original term is frequently applied to *the pitching of tents* by the nomade tribes in their wanderings, and is but another word for expressing their unsettled, migratory kind of life. Living mostly in tents, they pitched them now here, and now there, remaining for a longer or shorter time as the advantages of pasturage or plunder invited them; and the scope of the present passage is doubtless to say, that these numerous eastern hordes had so far obtained the mastery over Israel, that they fearlessly pitched their tents and made a protracted stay in the very heart of their country, moving on to its utmost limits, and consuming all its products as they advanced. See the next verse.——¶ *Till thou come unto Gaza.* Their ravages extended quite across the whole breadth of the land from the east, where they entered, to the limits of the Philistines' possessions, who inhabited the coast of the Mediterranean. *Them* they disturbed not, knowing them to be also hostile to the Israelites. A common enmity is a virtual league of alliance.——¶ *Neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass.* The Bedouins, in oppressing the cultivator, seize all the cattle that are brought abroad, and add them to their own flocks and herds, so that the inhabitants frequently become deprived of all their cattle, as was now the case with the Israelites. In

5 For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came [g] as grasshoppers for multitude; *for* both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it.

6 And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel [h] cried unto the LORD.

7 ¶ And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto

[g] ch. 7. 12.

[h] ch. 3. 15. Hos. 5. 15.

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western Asia the people who are subject to such annual incursions, generally make a compromise with the invaders, agreeing to pay them a heavy tribute, on condition that the harvests shall not be touched, or the cattle driven off. Even powerful communities, which might be able to cope with the Bedouins, often enter into a compromise of this sort, to prevent the necessity of continual warfare and watchfulness. With these, the arrangement is a matter of convenience; but miserable is the condition of those with whom it is a matter of necessity, and to whom it is the only alternative, on which they can secure a scanty subsistence from their fields. The tribute usually paid in produce, is generally very heavy; besides which the chiefs expect extraordinary presents, and what is received in one year as a present, is certain to be exacted the next year as a right. Thus the pressure accumulates, till it can no longer be borne; cultivation is then relinquished; and whole settlements are abandoned by their inhabitants, who disperse themselves into other villages or towns, or form a settlement where they hope to be more at ease. These particulars, gathered principally from the 'Pictorial Bible,' serve to show the distressed situation of the Israelites under the depredations of these ancient Bedouins.

5. *Came up with their cattle and their tents.* That is, with their wives, children, and domestics, the inhabitants of their tents. This is but an expansion of the idea of the preceding verse. The inroad of these eastern invaders was not a sudden and successful assault followed by a hasty retreat, but a *prolonged occupation* of the country of the Israelites, with their innumerable tents, and flocks, and herds. For numbers and voracity they are compared to 'grasshoppers,' or rather 'locusts,' as the word should be rendered, and nothing can convey a more vivid image of the countless multitude and the widespread ravages of these armies of marauders.—It was undoubtedly at this time that the famine took place which compelled the family of Elimelech to migrate to the land of Moab, and gave rise to the interesting events related in the book of Ruth. The oppression to which the Israelites were at this time subject was, therefore, of a very different character from those which they had previously suffered; and from the minute and expressive details which are given, we cannot but infer that they had never before experienced any thing so grievous.——¶ *Entered into the land to destroy it.* The *effect* of their entering in was to destroy, to lay waste the land; whether the Heb. particle (ל *to*) imports the *ac-*

the Lord because of the Midianites,

8 That the Lord sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage;

9 And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and [i] drave them

[i] Ps. 44. 2, 3.

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*tual design* is not so clear. It often indicates merely the *event*. See Note on Josh. 7. 7.

8. *The Lord sent a prophet.* Heb. ישלח איש נביא *yishla'h ish nâbi*, *sent a man, a prophet.* The writer would have it understood that it was a human messenger, and not an angel; for *angels* in Scripture are not called *prophets*, though *prophets* are sometimes called *angels.* Mal. 3. 1. God commissioned some individual whose name is not known, to act the part of a prophet, i. e. to be an organ of declaring the divine will on this occasion to his people. Whether he had ever exercised this function before is uncertain. The supposition that he had is at least unnecessary. Men were often raised up and endowed with extraordinary gifts for particular emergencies, and God having now determined, in answer to the prayers of his oppressed people, to grant them deliverance, begins by sending them a prophet before he raises up for them a Saviour. It was fitting that their deep and unfeigned repentance should precede the purposed relief, and a prophet would be the most suitable instrument of effecting this. The *immediate* object of our prayers is not always that which God sees fit *immediately* to grant. He may see that something else entirely different is necessary as a preparative to the main blessing, and as a general rule we cannot hope for the marks of divine forgiveness without being deeply humbled for our previous sin. 'The sending of prophets to a people, and the furnishing a land with faithful ministers, is a token for good, and an evidence that God has mercy in store for them.' *Henry.* In what way precisely this prophet executed his mission, whether by addressing the people in a general assembly, or by delivering it from city to city, and from tribe to tribe, it is not possible to decide; but his errand was to convince them of *sin*, and to bring them to repentance and humiliation before God, in view of their past transgressions. ——¶ *Brought you up from Egypt.* You in the loins or persons of your fathers. See this phraseology explained, Josh. 4. 23.

9. *Of all that oppressed you.* It is not perfectly clear to whom this is intended to apply. It cannot well be referred to the Canaanites, in Judea, as they can scarcely be said to have 'oppressed' the Israelites prior to the occupation of their lands by the latter, although they doubtless had every disposition to do it. Some of the Jewish commentators with much probability understand it of Sihon, Og, Arad, and others whom the Israelites encountered on their way from Egypt to Canaan, to whom should perhaps be added Balak, king of Moab, the Midianites, the Edomites, and whatever enemy *endeavored* to molest

out from before you, and gave you their land;

10 And I said unto you, I *am* the LORD your God; [k] fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice.

11 ¶ And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which *was* in Ophrah, that *pertained* unto Joash [l] the Abiezrite: and his son [m] Gideon threshed wheat by the wine-

them on their march. These they overcame, expelled, and took possession of their country, and so made good the declaration of the text.

10. *Fear not the gods of the Amorites.* Fear them not so as to serve and worship them; pay them no divine honors. By the Amorites is meant the Canaanitish nations in general. See on Josh. 24. 14. 15.——¶ *But ye have not obeyed my voice.* In this and the two preceding verses there is no express promise of deliverance, but merely a recital of the Lord's goodness and the charge of disobedience and rebellion brought against the people. The reason perhaps of an address so purely legal was to deepen their repentance, to make them feel more bitterly the evil and malignity of their conduct, and on the borders of despair to cry more earnestly for the divine succor. As we learn, however, from the *facts recorded* that it *was* the purpose of God to afford relief, we may properly understand the rebuke as *implying* the promise of pardon and deliverance, on condition of their returning to God. As a general rule, in God's dealings with sinners, where present evils are spoken of as a penalty of past offences, it is to be understood that forgiveness will follow reformation. We may therefore without hazard supply the last clause thus;—'But ye have not obeyed my voice; nevertheless I have heard your cry, and have purposed deliverance.' This is merely putting the *actual conduct* of the Most High into words.

11. *An angel of the Lord.* Not a created angel, but the Son of God himself, the eternal Word, the Lord of angels, anticipating the appearance he was afterwards in the fullness of time to make in human form. This is evident from his being called, v. 14–16, 'Jehovah,' and from his saying, 'I will be with thee.' See on ch. 2. 1.——¶ *Sat under an oak which was in Ophrah.* Or, Heb. 'sat under a grove or cluster of oaks.' Ophrah was a city of Manasseh, west of Jordan, situated about sixteen miles north of Jericho, and not far from the river Jordan.——¶ *Joash the Abiezrite.* Of the posterity, of the family of Abiezer, who belonged to the tribe of Manasseh, Josh. 17. 2. This Ophrah probably fell to the inheritance of this family, and it may be also so called to distinguish it from another Ophrah, in the tribe of Benjamin. Josh. 18. 23.——¶ *Gideon threshed wheat by the wine-press.* The Hebrew properly denotes, 'threshed wheat with a stick in a wine-press;' a very expressive illustration of the remarks made above respecting the oppression of the Midianites. Gideon was obliged to thresh his wheat in a small quantity, and in an unusual

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[k] 2 Kings 17. 35, 37, 38. Jer. 10. 2.

[l] Josh. 17. 2. [m] Heb. 11. 32, Gedeon

press, to hide *it* from the Midianites.

12 And the [n]angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, the LORD *is* [o]with thee, thou mighty man of valor.

13 And Gideon said unto him, O my Lord, if the LORD be with

[n] ch. 13. 3. Luke 1. 11, 28.

[o] Josh. 1. 5.

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place, to conceal it from the enemy. This shows how extreme was the distress of the Israelites, seeing that they could not retain any part of their own produce except by stealth. The smallness of the quantity is shown by the manner in which it was threshed, which was not with cattle, as was usual with large quantities, but by means of the flail, which was seldom employed but in threshing small quantities. And then the threshing was in or near the winepress, that is, in an unusual place, in ground appropriated to another purpose. The flail also falling on grain placed on the dead ground, not on a boarded floor, as with us, made but little noise, whereas the bellowing of the oxen might, in the other case, have led to detection. It will be observed, however, contrary to the opinion of some commentators, that this threshing-ground was in the open air, else Gideon could not have expected dew to fall upon the ground or on the fleece, which he spread out there, v. 37–40.——¶ *To hide it from the Midianites.* Heb. 'to cause it to flee from the Midianites;' i. e. that it might be hastily gathered up on the approach of the enemy and conveyed to a place of safety. The original word is the same with that employed Ex. 9. 20, 'He that feared the word of the Lord—*made* his servants and his cattle *flee* into the houses.' where it is evidently exegetical of 'gather' in the preceding verse.

12. *The Lord is with thee.* Chal. 'the Word of the Lord is for thy help, thou mighty man of valor.' An ancient form of salutation, expressing the assurance, or conveying an invocation, of the presence, protection and blessing of God. From Gideon's answer, v. 13, it would appear that the former is the sense in this passage. Thus Boaz saluted his reapers, Ruth, 2. 4, and thus the angel accosted the mother of Christ, Luke 1. 28. Josephus thus speaks of the incident; 'At this time somewhat appeared to him in the shape of a young man, and told him he was a happy man and beloved of God.' J. Ant. L. v. 6. 2.——¶ *Thou mighty man of valor.* This appellation may at once have been founded upon some previous display of courage and personal prowess put forth by Gideon, and may also have been *predictive* of the character he should hereafter exhibit as a divinely commissioned and qualified deliverer of his countrymen. The instruments which God chooses to effect his purposes he endows, strengthens, and animates for the work to which he calls them. Though often to human view *unlikely* instruments, yet they will ever be found best qualified for the employment assigned them.

13. *If the Lord be with us.* Chal. 'is the Shekinah of the Lord for our help?' The angel, it will be observed, addressed Gideon in the singular, 'the Lord is with *thee*;' but he, in his reply, continually makes use of the plural,—'if the Lord be with *us*

us, why then is all this befallen us? and [p]where *be* all his miracles [q]which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? but now the Lord hath [r]forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.

14 And the Lord looked upon him, and said, [s]Go in this thy

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[p] So Ps. 89. 49. Isa. 59. 1, and 63. 15.
[q] Ps. 44. 1.
[r] 2 Chron. 15. 2.
[s] 1 Sam. 12. 11. Heb. 11. 32, 34.

—showing that he identified himself with his people, and that he scarcely knew how to conceive of the divine presence with *him*, when there was no evidence of its being enjoyed by *them*. An humble and self-distrusting spirit is always backward to recognize the special tokens of the divine favor, and, far from wishing to monopolize them, is anxious that such gracious manifestations should be shared by others.——¶ *Why then is all this befallen us?* Heb. לָמָּה מְצָאַתְנוּ כָּל זֹאת *lâmâh metzâathnu kol zōth, why hath all this found us?* A plain acknowledgment that the evils suffered were occasioned by the withdrawment of the divine presence. It is supposed, by the very terms, that the continued enjoyment of the light of God's countenance would have precluded them.——¶ *Where be all his miracles*, &c. Why does not the same power which delivered our fathers from the yoke of the Egyptians, deliver us out of the hands of the Midianites? 'It is sometimes hard, but never impossible, to reconcile cross providences with the presence of God and his favor.' *Henry.*——¶ *Delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.* Heb. כַּף *kaph*, properly *the hollow of the hand;* different from יָד *yad, the hand*, usually employed in such connexions.—'The valiant man was here weak, weak in faith, weak in discourse, whilst he argues God's absence by affliction, and his presence by deliverances, and the unlikelihood of success, by his own inability; all gross inconsequences. Rather should he have inferred God's presence in their correction; for wheresoever God chastises, there he is, yea, there he is in mercy. Nothing more proves us his than his stripes: he will not bestow chastisement where he loves not. Fond nature thinks God should not suffer the wind to blow on his dear ones, but none out of the place of torment have suffered so much as his dearest children. He says not, "We are idolaters; therefore the Lord hath forsaken us, because we have forsaken him." This sequel had been as good as the other was faulty; "He hath delivered us unto the Midianites, therefore he hath forsaken us." Sins, not afflictions, argue God absent.' *Bp. Hall.*

14. *And the Lord looked upon him.* That is, not merely directed his eyes towards him, but looked upon him efficaciously, with an indescribable power and influence, as it is said, Luke 22. 61, 'And the Lord turned and *looked* upon Peter;' i. e. in such a way as he only *could* look upon him; with an efficacy absolutely divine, the consequence of which was he went out and wept bitterly. Here, however, the look was one of encouragement and favor, one which banished his fears and inspired him with new life, spirits, and confidence. It will be noticed that the language here employed, 'The Lord (Jeho-

might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: [t]have not I sent thee?

15 And he said unto him, O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, [u]my family *is* poor in Manasseh, and I *am* the least in my father's house.

16 And the LORD said unto him, [x]Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.

17 And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then [y]show me a sign that thou talkest with me.

vah) looked upon him,' plainly discloses the real character of him who is above called an angel.——¶*Go in this thy strength.* In the supernatural strength and fortitude with which thou perceivest thyself to be endowed, as the result of this interview. God gives men a commission of service by giving them all the qualifications necessary for the execution of it, and when this is the case, human ceremonies merely *recognize* instead of *creating* the authority under which such persons act. 'A good cause, a good calling, and a good conscience, will make a good courage.' *Trapp.*

15. *My family is poor.* Heb. אַלְפִּי הַדַּל *alpi haddal*, which, though positive in form, is superlative in import, and is to be rendered, *my thousand is the meanest*, or *poorest.* From Ex. 18. 25, we learn that the Israelites were divided into *tens*, *fifties*, *hundreds*, and *thousands;* a division expressly recognized, Mic. 5. 2. 'Thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the *thousands* of Israel,' &c. These *thousands* embraced of course numerous families, and the assertion of Gideon seems to be, that the thousand to which his family belonged had become not only greatly *diminished in numbers*, but also *impoverished in resources*, so that they could do little towards withstanding the enemy.——¶*Least in my father's house.* Either the youngest, or in his apprehension the least competent for the work in question. He would represent himself as lacking in that ability, rank, and influence which would induce his countrymen to join his standard in an enterprise against the Midianites.

16. *Smite the Midianites as one man.* As easily and effectually as if they were but one man.

17. *Show me a sign, that thou talkest with me.* That it is thou, the true and real Jehovah, with whom I am honored to speak; that there is no mistake, no illusion, as to the personage with whom I am now holding converse. This request seems to have been prompted by a momentary misgiving whether it were really the divine Being himself with whom he now had the honor of an interview. 'The unusualness of those revelations, in those corrupted times, was such, that Gideon might think of any thing rather than an angel: no marvel if so strange a promise from an unknown messenger found not a perfect assent. Fain would he believe, but fain would have good warrant for his faith. In matters of faith we cannot go on too sure grounds: as Moses therefore, being

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[t] Josh. 1. 9. ch. 4. 6. [u] See 1 Sam. 9. 21.

[x] Ex. 3. 12. Josh. 1. 5. [y] Ex. 4. 1–8. ver. 36, 37. 2 Kings 20. 8. Ps. 86. 17. Isai. 7. 11.

18 [z]Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set *it* before thee. And he said, I will tarry until thou come again.

19 ¶ [a]And Gideon went in, and made ready a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour: the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a

sent on the same errand, desired a sign, whereby Israel might know that God sent him; so Gideon desires a sign from this bearer, to know that the news is from God.' *Bp. Hall.*

18. *Bring forth my present.* Heb. מנחתי *min'hâthi, my mincha;* a word usually employed to signify *a meal-offering*, i. e. an offering of bread, wine, oil, flour, and such like, as is observed on Gen. 4. 3, 4. This has led some commentators to suppose that Gideon, by such an oblation, recognized in his visitor a divine person, whom he intended to honor by a real sacrifice, and in fact the Greek version renders it, 'I will bring forth a sacrifice, and sacrifice before thee.' Others regard it merely as a hospitable meal provided for the entertainment of a respectable stranger. But in this case it is not so easy to perceive how Gideon could have anticipated the working of a sign or miracle in connexion with the offering, as it is evident he did. He would seem, in fact, to have forgotten the request which he had a moment before made. The remark of Henry on the word is at least very plausible:—'It is the same word that is used for a meat-offering (meal-offering), and perhaps that word which signifies both, because Gideon intended to leave it to this divine person, to determine which it should be, when he had it before him, whether a feast, or a meat-offering, and accordingly he would be able to judge concerning him; if he ate of it as common meat, he would suppose him to be a man, a prophet; if otherwise, as it proved, he should know him to be an angel.'

19. *Made ready a kid*, &c. The manner in which the Arabs still entertain strangers will cast light upon this passage. Shaw, in his Preface, observes;—'Besides a bowl of milk, and a basket of figs, raisins, or dates, which upon our arrival were presented to us, to stay our appetites, the master of the tent where we lodged, fetched us from his flock, according to the number of our company, a kid or a goat, a lamb or a sheep, half of which was immediately seethed by his wife, and served with cuscasoe; the rest was made *kabab;* i. e. cut into pieces and roasted, which we reserved for our breakfast or dinner next day.'——¶*Put the broth in a pot*, &c. We are to infer, according to the editor of the Pictorial Bible, either that Gideon boiled or stewed the kid and served up the meat and soup separately; or else that he stewed one part of the kid, and roasted or boiled the other. Both methods are consonant to oriental usages; and, perhaps, the latter is the best hypothesis, as the animal thus divided may be the more speedily dressed. In this case, the roasted part was probably prepared in the most usual way of preparing a hasty dish, that is, by

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[z] Gen. 18. 3, 5. ch. 13. 15.

[a] Gen. 18. 6, 7, 8.

pot, and brought *it* out unto him under the oak, and presented *it*.

20 And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and [b]lay *them* upon this rock, and [c]pour out the broth. And he did so.

21 ¶ Then the angel of the LORD put forth the end of the staff that *was* in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and [d]there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the LORD departed out of his sight.

22 And when Gideon [e]perceived that he *was* an angel of the LORD, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord GOD! [f]for because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face.

[b] ch. 13. 19. [c] See 1 Kings 18. 33, 34.

[d] Lev. 9. 24. 1 Kings 18. 38. 2 Chron. 7. 1. [e] ch. 13. 21. [f] Gen. 16. 13, and 32. 30 Ex. 33. 20. ch. 13. 22.

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cutting the meat into small pieces, several of which are strung upon a skewer, and so roasted or rather broiled; as several of these skewers of meat can be dressed together, a meal may in this way be very soon prepared. This dish, he remarks, is called *kaboob*, and is very common in western Asia. When meat is thus dressed in *two* ways, the stew is generally intended for immediate use, and the *kaboob* for a future meal, or for the traveller to carry with him for his refreshment on the way. As Gideon brought he meat, as distinguished from the 'broth,' in a basket, it was probably intended by him that the stranger should take it away with him for his future use. This was a proper mark of careful hospitality and attention. The basket was, probably, a small hand-basket made of palm-leaves or rushes. ——¶*Brought it out unto him under the oak.* See Note on Gen. 18. 6–8. The Arabs are accustomed, even to the present day, to receive their guests under a shade in the open air.

21. *There rose up fire out of the rock*, &c. Showing hereby that he was not a man who needed meat, but the Son of God, who was to be served and honored by sacrifice; and signifying also to Gideon that he had 'found grace in his sight,' for God usually testified his acceptance of sacrifices, by kindling them with fire from heaven. The acceptance of the sacrifice was also a token of the acceptance of his person; it went to confirm the commission now given him, and to afford him every needed assurance of success.——¶*Departed out of his sight.* Though he had hitherto appeared in the form of a traveller, with a staff in his hand, yet he did not walk off as a man, but vanished and disappeared as a spirit; perhaps in the flame of fire which he had kindled. Comp. ch. 13. 20.

22. *Perceived that he was an angel of the Lord.* Rather, 'Perceived that he was *the* angel of the Lord.' v. 11. Comp. Gen. 32. 30; Ex. 33. 20.——¶*Alas! O Lord God!* &c. An elliptical sentence strikingly expressive of the agitation and terror into which Gideon was thrown, upon discovering the real character of the Angel. It is, as if he had said, 'Have mercy upon me, O Lord God, or I shall

23 And the LORD said unto him, [g] Peace *be* unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die.

24 Then Gideon built an altar there unto the LORD, and called it Jehovah-shalom: unto this day it [h] *is* yet in Ophrah of the Abi-ezrites.

25 ¶ And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock, even the second

[g] Dan. 10. 19

[h] ch. 8. 32.

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surely die, because I have seen the angel of Jehovah face to face!' As remarked upon Gen. 16. 13, it was anciently a prevalent sentiment, that if any man saw God, or his representative Angel, he must die. On this account, Gideon is alarmed and prays for his life. 'Ever since man has by sin exposed himself to God's wrath and curse, an express from heaven has been a terror to him, as he scarcely dares expect good tidings thence; at least, in this world of sense, it is a very awful thing to have any sensible conversation with that world of spirits, to which we are so much strangers.' *Henry.*

23. *The Lord said unto him, Peace be unto thee,* &c. 'Peace,' i. e. safety, life, well-being; the exact reverse of what he feared. It is uncertain whether this was spoken in an audible voice, or by inward suggestion, probably the latter. 'The angel that departed for the wonder, yet returns for the comfort of Gideon. It is not usual with God to leave his children in amaze, but he brings them out in the same mercy which led them in, and will magnify his grace in the one, no less than his power in the other.' *Bp. Hall.*

24. *Gideon built an altar there—and called it Jehovah-shalom.* That is, upon the top of the rock, on which the miracle had been wrought, v. 26. The purpose for which the altar was erected, is explained in the verses immediately following. The words יהוה שלום *Yehovâh shâlom*, literally signify, *The Lord, peace*, and he probably so denominated the altar in reference to the assurance of peace and blessing given him on that memorable spot.

25. *And it came to pass the same night.* Rather, '*for* it came to pass the same night;' intimating the *reason* that led him to erect the altar. The incident is mentioned in the preceding verse by anticipation. There is no ground to suppose that Gideon erected the altar *before* he had received the divine command for so doing, and that was not till the night after the vision, as is evident from what follows. But it is entirely accordant with Scripture usage to relate an event at first in the gross, in a general and compendious way, and afterwards to describe it in detail, with an express enumeration of all the circumstances.——¶ *Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock.* Or, Heb. 'and the second bullock,' implying that *two* bullocks were now to be slain; but as mention is made of only one in v. 26, 28, our present rendering is probably correct. But why this animal is distinguished by the epithet 'second,' is a question not easily answered. It may be conjectured, that the Midianites had taken away all the cattle of the Israelites that they could lay their

bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and [i]cut down the grove that *is* by it:

26 And build an altar unto the Lord thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt-sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down.

27 Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the Lord had said unto him: and

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[i] Ex. 34. 13. Deut. 7. 5.

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hands upon, so that Gideon's father had very few cattle left, perhaps only two, and of these the 'second,' in point of age, Gideon is now directed to offer as the fittest for sacrifice. After all, the grounds of the epithet cannot be satisfactorily settled.—As Gideon's father appears to have been addicted to idolatry, as well as many of his fellow-townsmen, it may be, as many of the elder commentators suppose, that this bullock had been kept and fattened by him for a sacrifice to Baal.——¶ *The altar of Baal that thy father hath.* Which belonged to his father, probably as being built on his ground, and the place of his worship, though evidently designed for the common use of the whole city, v. 29, 30.——¶ *Cut down the grove that is by it.* Probably a grove dedicated to Ashtaroth, and perhaps containing her image, as the original word is אשרה *Asherah*, on which see Note on ch. 3. 7. 'First must Baal's altar be ruined, ere God's be built: both may not stand together: the true God will have no society with idols, neither will allow it us. I do not hear him say, "That altar and grove, which were abused to Baal, consecrate now to me;" but as one whose holy jealousy will abide no worship till there be no idolatry, he first commands down the monuments of superstition, and then enjoins his own service: the wood of Baal's grove must be used to burn a sacrifice unto God. When it was once cut down, God's detestation and their danger ceased; the good creatures of God, that have been profaned to idolatry, may, in a change of their use, be employed to the holy service of their Maker.' *Bp. Hall.*

26. *Upon the top of this rock.* Heb. על ראש המעוז הזה *al rosh hammâoz hazzĕh, upon the top of this strong-hold.* The native rock had probably been in some way fortified and converted into a fortress, to secure them from the Midianites.——¶ *In the ordered place.* Or, Heb. במערכה *bammaarâkâh*, *in an orderly manner.* The original signifies *arrangement*, *disposition*, *order*, and doubtless has reference to the prescribed mode of erecting the altar, Ex. 20. 24, 25, and also of laying on the wood and the pieces of flesh prepared for sacrifice. The ceremony was to be gone about with care and reverence; it was not to be performed in a cursory, hurried, or irregular manner, but with a due observance of all the appointed formalities. Although Gideon was not a priest, nor was this the established place of sacrifice or worship, yet God may dispense with his own institutions, whenever it seems good in his eyes. His call and commission can make any person, and his choice any place, sacred.

*so* it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do *it* by day, that he did *it* by night.

28 ¶ And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down that *was* by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar *that was* built.

29 And they said one to another, Who hath done this thing? And when they had inquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing.

30 Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die: because he hath cast down the altar of

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27. *Feared his father's household.* Lest they should have opposed him from an apprehension, that the destruction of the altar would incense the Midianites, and so bring augmented evil upon themselves, v. 30. It is not to be inferred that Gideon feared the resentment of his kindred or neighbors, or that he shrunk from any danger connected with the undertaking; but as a matter of policy and prudence, he saw fit to engage in the enterprise by night, when he would be least exposed to interruption or opposition from the votaries of Baal. It appears obvious that his father was of this number; accordingly he took ten of his own servants, in whom he could confide, and who, we may suppose, had, like their master, preserved their integrity, and not 'bowed the knee to Baal,' and by their aid faithfully executed the work enjoined upon him.

29. *They said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing.* By what means they satisfied themselves of this, we are not informed. The original, by using two nearly synonymous words, ידרשו ויבקשו *yidroshu vayebakkeshu, they inquired and investigated,* implies that a very careful and diligent inquiry was made. It is probable that Gideon had been previously known to be somewhat disaffected to the prevalent idolatry, and upon putting this and all other circumstances together, they hesitate not to fix their suspicions upon him, which may have been confirmed by the disclosures of some of the party engaged with him. In some way or other, the evidence was conclusive against him, and nothing but his blood could satisfy the persecuting rage of his idolatrous fellow-townsmen.

30. *Bring out thy son that he may die.* As a profane and sacrilegious wretch. To such a pitch of impiety were these degenerate Israelites arrived, that they do not scruple to call upon Joash to deliver up his own son to death, for aiming to suppress practices, which, if the law had had its course, would have subjected *them* to death. The divine law expressly prescribed that the worship of idols should be treated as a capital offence, and yet these wicked men impiously turn the penalty upon the worshippers of the God of Israel! 'Was it not enough to offer the choicest of their bullocks to Baal, but must the bravest youths of their city fall as a sacrifice to that dunghill deity, when they pretended he was provoked? How soon will idolators become per-

Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that *was* by it.

31 And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death whilst *it is yet* morning: if he *be* a god, let him plead for himself, because *one* hath cast down his altar.

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secutors.' *Henry*. Rosenmuller suggests, with much plausibility, that it was in reference to this incident Gideon derived his name, with posterity, from גדע *gada, to cut or hew down*, q. d. *a cutter-down, a demolisher*. Innumerable instances occur in the Scriptures, in which persons are called by *acquired*, and not by their *original* names, the latter being in fact often entirely lost.

31. *Joash said unto all that stood against him*, &c. Joash had evidently before been a patron of Baal's altar, but here he appears decidedly taking part with his son who had demolished it. To what the sudden change in his mind was owing, we are not informed. The probability, we think, is, that Gideon, perceiving in the morning to what a pitch of exasperation the citizens were wrought, and how seriously they threatened his life, took occasion frankly to inform his father of the visit of the angel, and of all the circumstances of his call and commission, and that this, added to his feelings as a father, had served at once to convince him of his former error and to determine him to stand by his son against the rage of the populace. His argument is briefly this;—Do not act thus precipitately against my son; for if Baal be really a God, he will avenge his own cause, and if he be not a god, then they who plead for him deserve instant death. A deity who cannot defend himself, is unworthy of the defence of others. This reasoning was unanswerable, and it prevailed. It was, in fact, a fair challenge to Baal to 'do either good or evil,' and the result convinced his worshippers of their folly in praying to one to help them who could not defend himself.—The following is proposed as an amended translation of this verse, of which of course the Hebrew scholar alone is qualified to pronounce judgment;—'And Joash said unto all that stood against (rather, *by, upon*, i. e. round about him), will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him (Gideon)? *seeing that if he were a god* whosoever should *have dared* to contend with him (Baal) would have died before morning; if he is a god he will *himself* plead with him (Gideon), because he hath cast down his altar.' The drift of Joash, as we understand the passage, is to represent to Baal's votaries how absurd it is for *them* to undertake to avenge the insult done to their idol, when if he were a god, as they thought him to be, he would assuredly have taken the matter into his own hands and punished the offender on the spot without suffering him to see the light of the morning. We have little doubt that this is the true sense of the words. The common version is not only contradictory in making Joash propose, that he who pleadeth for Baal should be immediately put to death, and then asserting that Baal should plead for himself; but it erroneously renders עד הבקר *ad habboker*, by *whilst it is yet morning*, when its true significa-

32 Therefore on that day he called him [k]Jerubbaal, saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he hath thrown down his altar.

33 ¶ Then all [l]the Midianites, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in [m]the valley of Jezreel.

34 But [n]the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he [o]blew a trumpet; and Abi-ezer was gathered after him.

[k] 1 Sam. 12. 11. 2 Sam. 11. 21. See Jer. 11. 13. Hos. 9. 10. [l] ver. 3.

[m] Josh. 17. 16. [n] ch. 3. 10. 1 Chron. 12. 18. 2 Chron. 24. 20. [o] Num. 10. 3. ch. 3. 27.

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tion is *until* or *against the morning*, i. e. he would have perished *against* or *previous to* the morning; Baal would have killed him outright. The proposed rendering is clearly confirmed by the tenor of the next verse. The conduct of Joash, under these circumstances, leads us to remark, (1) That if we have been zealous in a bad cause, we should with greater zeal seek to amend what we have done amiss, by our open advocacy of the truth. (2) Nothing must prevail upon us to give up the innocent, whoever combine to destroy them. (3) Though it may be highly dangerous to reprove a wicked people, we must do our duty, and trust God with the event.

32. *He called him.* Rather according to the Heb. idiom 'he was called;' not that his father particularly gave him that name, but it became an appellation by which he was generally called.——¶ *Jerubbaal.* Heb. ירבעל *Yerubbaal*, doubtless contracted from ירב בעל *yereb Baal*, *one with whom Baal pleads* or *contends;* i. e. impliedly, one with whom Baal may plead if he pleases; with whom he is challenged to plead if he can or dare. According to a very common usage, it is a kind of play upon the original word for *plead* (ריב *rib*), which occurs so often in the preceding verse. The name was evidently intended to imply a standing defiance to Baal, to do his worst upon Gideon and his adherents. Instead of this name, we find in 2 Sam. 11. 21, the equivalent title ירבשת *Yerubbosheth*, i. e. *the shame*, or *the abomination*, *shall contend*, applied to Gideon. Baal is in several instances called, in the prophets, 'the shame,' 'the shameful thing,' &c. See Jer. 11. 13; Hos. 9, 10.——¶ *Saying, let Baal*, &c. Rather, 'Meaning, Let Baal,' &c. Thus the original (לאמר) is often to be understood. It is equivalent to the phrase 'which being interpreted is,' &c.

33. *Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites—went over.* Heb. 'all Midian and Amalek.' They passed over the Jordan and crossed the country as far as to the borders of Manasseh and Issachar, and pitched in the 'plain' (rather than the 'valley') of Esdraelon, anciently called Jezreel, of which see on ch. 5. 21.

34. *The spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon.* Heb. רוח יהוה לבשה את גדון *rua'h Yehovah lâbeshâh eth Gidōn*, *the spirit of the Lord clothed Gideon.* That is, filled him up fully, possessed him entirely, raising him above himself, in all the endowments necessary for his arduous undertaking. Chal. 'a spirit of fortitude from before the Lord clothed Gideon.' The phrase is remarkable, as inti-

35 And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh; who also was gathered after him: and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them.

36 ¶ And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by my hand, as thou hast said,

37 [p] Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor: *and* if the dew be on the fleece only, and

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[p] See Ex. 4. 3, 4, 6, 7.

mating his being endued with supernatural courage, zeal, and wisdom in the prosecution of the work before him. Being thus clothed with the armor of God he 'waxed valiant in fight,' and was enabled to 'turn to flight the armies of the aliens.' The same phrase in the original occurs 1 Chron. 12. 18; 2 Chron. 24. 20, though in both instances rendered in our version, 'The spirit of the Lord came upon,' which comes far short of the force and significancy of the Hebrew. A similar phraseology is met with in the N. T. Luke 24. 49, 'Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, till ye be *endued* (Gr. clothed) *with power from on high*.'——¶ *And he blew a trumpet.* Caused trumpets to be blown to call in volunteers, as we before remarked of Ehud, ch. 3. 27.——¶ *Abiezer was gathered after him.* Heb. ויזעק *yizzâĕk, was called or cried together, was convoked by proclamation,* By Abiezer, is meant the house or family of Abiezer, the kindred of Gideon, as Israel often stands for Israelites.

35. *Throughout all Manasseh.* Probably on both sides the Jordan.——¶ *Unto Asher—Zebulun—and Naphtali.* These were near to the half tribe of Manasseh on the north. As they naturally concluded that if their neighbors were overrun by the Midianites, their own turn would come next, they were forward to unite against a common enemy. The tribe of Ephraim lay to the south of Manasseh. They were not invited, and this gave rise to the crimination mentioned ch. 8. 1.

37. *I will put a fleece of wool*, &c. It is exceedingly difficult to determine whether Gideon desired the working of this miracle for the confirmation of his own wavering faith, or mainly to strengthen the confidence of his followers. From the circumstances of his interview with the Angel, from the success of his endeavors to destroy idolatry in his father's house, from the readiness of several of the tribes to enlist under his banners, and more especially from its being said just before, that he was 'clothed with the spirit of the Lord,' it would seem scarcely credible that he could have desired any stronger assurance himself of the divine presence and blessing. Yet considering the weakness of human nature, it is more than possible that this might have been the case; that the view of the great multitudes of the enemy may have rather intimidated his spirit, and made him anxious for a still farther manifestation of the divine favor, as the seal of his commission. Some have even supposed that God, who intended to vouchsafe to him these new tokens of his mission, put into his heart to ask them. However this may be, the result went, (1) *To illustrate the divine condescension.* God, instead of being offended with

*it be* dry upon all the earth *besides*, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by my hand, as thou hast said.

38 And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl-full of water.

39 And Gideon said unto God,

his servant, kindly acceded to his request. A fellow creature who had given such solemn promises, would have been quite indignant at finding his veracity seemingly called in question. How offensive was the apparent tenor of the request;—'If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, and *do as thou hast said*, behold I will put a fleece of wool on the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, *then shall I know that thou wilt save* Israel by mine hand, *as thou hast said*.' Nor did even this suffice; he must go still farther, and prove God a second time by reversing the request, before he can believe *that God will do as he has said*. Yet the Most High, in his amazing clemency, far from being offended, gives him the satisfaction he desires and accommodates himself to the wishes of his doubting servant! 'Is this, O Lord, the manner of men!' (2) *To show the efficacy of prayer*. It was prayer that prevailed in this instance. With great humility and much tenderness of spirit, Gideon besought the divine interposition. When he repeated his request for a second sign, the reverse of the former, he did it with an humble apology, like Abraham in similar circumstances, deprecating God's displeasure, because it looked so much like a capricious distrust, and his supplication prevailed. So we, under circumstances of pressing exigency, may look for a gracious answer to our importunate prayers. Not that we are to expect miraculous manifestations, for the age of miracles is past, but we may confidently expect that even in relation to temporal matters, our prayers will not go forth in vain; while in reference to spiritual matters, they shall descend almost in visible answers on our souls. Were we to suppose the whole church, or neighborhood where we dwell, to be in a state of the utmost barrenness and desolation, as it respects the blessings of salvation, yet if we cry earnestly to God, the dew of his grace shall descend upon us in the richest abundance. If, on the other hand, the judgments of heaven are poured forth around us, to us a merciful exemption shall be given, according to the divine promise, 'A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee.' No man can conceive to what an extent God will magnify his grace and condescension towards an humble supplicant, calling upon him from the depths of his soul, till he has himself made the happy experiment. 'We may ask what we will, and it shall be done unto us.' ——¶ *Dry upon all the earth* beside. Upon all the ground immediately adjacent to the place.

38. *A bowl full of water*. For an account of the abundant dews which fall in the East, see Note on Gen. 27. 28. 'We remember,' says the editor of the Pictorial Bible on this place, 'while travelling in Western Asia,

[q] Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew.

40 And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground.

## CHAPTER VII.

THEN [a] Jerubbaal (who *is* Gideon) and all the people that *were* with him, rose up early and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh, in the valley.

2 And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people that *are*

[q] Gen. 18. 32.

[a] ch. 6. 32.

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to have found all the baggage, which had been left in the open air, so wet, when we came forth from the tent in the morning, that it seemed to have been exposed to heavy rain, and we could with difficulty believe that no rain had fallen. So also, when sleeping in the open air, the sheep-skin cloak which served for a covering has been found, in the morning, scarcely less wet than if it had been immersed in water.'

39. *Let me prove—with the fleece.* Let me make trial.——¶ *Let it be dry upon the fleece.* This might be considered a more extraordinary event than the former, as it is natural for wool to absorb whatever moisture there may be in the air about it; but this was in direct contravention of the ordinary laws of nature. 'So willing is God to *give to the heirs of promise strong consolation*, even by two immutable things. He suffers himself not only to be prevailed with by their importunities, but to be prescribed to by their doubts and dissatisfactions.' *Henry.*

## CHAPTER VII.

1. *The well of Harod.* Heb. 'fountain of Harod,' i. e. of trepidation. If this were a *town* or *village*, it is no where else mentioned. Probably as חרד *'harad* signifies to *shake*, or *tremble through fear*, the fountain may have had its name from the *terror* and *panic* with which the Midianites were seized at this place; or, what is still more likely, from the *fear* which induced many of his adherents to turn back from that place, as related v. 3, where this very word occurs מי ירא וחרד *mi yârë ve'hârëd, whosoever is fearful and afraid.* Nothing is more common in the Scriptures than for persons and places to be named from memorable events. The fountain was situated not far from Gilboa, on the borders of Manasseh.——¶ *Hill of Moreh.* Heb. 'hill of the archer.' Probably an eminence in the Gilboa range of mountains, and conjectured to be so called from the *archers* that there wounded Saul, 1 Sam. 31. 3, which if correct will prove the book to have been written subsequent to that event. ——¶ *In the valley.* The valley of Jezreel or Esdraelon, of which see ch. 5. 21.

2. *The people—are too many.* Though the whole army of the Israelites consisted of only 32,000, while that of the Midianites amounted to at least 135,000, or four to one to the Israel-

with thee *are* too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel [b]vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.

3 Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, [c]Whosoever *is* fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead

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[b] Deut. 8. 17. Isai. 10. 13. 1 Cor. 1. 29. 2 Cor. 4. 7.

[c] Deut. 20 8.

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ites, yet the Lord deems this small number entirely too large for the purposes he had in view, and even when diminished to 10,000, orders a still farther reduction. The reason of this command is given in what follows. The discharge of so large a number of volunteers by no means implies that they did not do right in willingly offering themselves to the expedition; the *act* of enlisting in the service was proper and commendable, but God saw that the *spirit* by which they were actuated was in multitudes of them defective, and therefore so ordered it that they should be put to the test, while at the same time he secured to his own great name the entire glory of the victory. We often read in the sacred narrative of God's bringing about great events by few agents, but this is the first instance in which he purposely made them fewer. His design in addition to what has been mentioned above doubtless was, (1) To show that as to any particular instruments, he could, in effecting his purposes, easily dispense with them, and that they were more indebted to him for employing them, than he to them for tendering their services. (2) To shame and humble his people for their past cowardice in tamely submitting to the yoke of Midian. By the result of this enterprise he would afford them convincing proof that the disproportion of numbers formed no apology for their remissness; that if they had, as they ought to have done, made sure of the favor of God, one of them might have chased a thousand. But chief of all, his purpose is to silence and exclude boasting—'lest Israel vaunt themselves against me.' 'How jealous is God of his honor! He is willing to give deliverance to Israel, but the praise of the deliverance he will keep to himself; and will shorten the means, that he may have the measure of the glory.' *Bp. Hall.*

3. *Proclaim in the ears of the people,* &c. This was according to a standing enactment of the law, Deut 20. 8, the design of which was to prevent the contagious effects of cowardice or 'faint-heartedness,' in the army. The punctilious observance of this precept by Judas Maccabeus is mentioned 1 Mac. 3. 56, a portion of ancient history, which unfortunately is apt to be greatly overlooked and undervalued in consequence of being contained in the 'Apocrypha.' These writings, though not canonical, are intrinsically of very great value, and Christians generally, if but made aware of their true character as to authority, would prize their Bibles none the less for containing them.——¶ *Depart early from mount Gilead.* A clause of very difficult solution from the fact, that mount Gilead was on the eastern side of the Jordan, whereas Gid-

And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand.

4 And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people *are* yet *too* many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there; and it shall be

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eon was now on the west, not far from mount Gilboa, and did not cross the Jordan till after the victory. Some would solve the difficulty by supposing that there was a mountain called Gilead on the *west* of the Jordan as well as on the east. But as there is no evidence of this, the hypothesis merely cuts the knot without untying it. Others again propose a new reading for the text, viz. *Gilboa* instead of *Gilead.* But this is equally gratuitous. For our own part, as the true import of the Heb. צפג *tzâphag*, rendered *depart early*, is left by the lexicographers entirely undetermined, we feel disposed to abide by the rendering of the Chaldee, 'Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return, and *let a selection be made from mount Gilead*,' i. e. from the men of mount Gilead, or the Abiezrites, among whom Gideon dwelt, and upon whom he supposed he could put more dependance. This interpretation would seem to be strikingly confirmed by the complaint of the Ephraimites in ch. 8. 1, 2, on which see Notes.——¶ *There returned of the people twenty and two thousand.* The application of a rigid test is apt to make thinning work in the ranks of God's professed friends. One would have thought that against such an enemy as Midian, and under such a leader as Gideon, no Israelite would have owned himself fearful and proved recreant to his duty. Yet two parts out of three turned their backs upon their country's standard when they saw the numbers and the strength of the enemy! Alas, if it should be found that the true and constant hearts enlisted under the banner of Christ bear no larger proportion than this to the whole number, who will not do well to fear and tremble for his own fidelity? 'Christianity requires men. David's royal band of worthies was the type of the forces of the church, all valiant men, and able to encounter with thousands. Doth but a foul word, or a frown, scare thee from Christ? Doth the loss of a little land or silver disquiet thee? Doth but the sight of the Midianites in the valley strike thee? Home then, home to the world; thou art not for the conquering band of Christ. If thou canst not resolve to follow him through infamy, prisons, racks, gibbets, flames, depart to thine house, and save thy life to thy loss.' *Bp. Hall.*

4. *The people are yet too many.* It is hardly possible to conceive a severer trial of faith than that to which Gideon's was now subjected. While he doubtless thought his men too *few*, God saw that they were too *many*, and ordered a still farther reduction! 'This may help us to understand those providences which sometimes seem to weaken the church and its interests—its friends are too many, too mighty, too wise, for God to work deliverance by; God is taking a course to lessen them, that he may be exalted in his own strength.' *Henry.*——¶ *I will try them.* Will put them to the proof; or, Heb. 'will separate, will purify,' the word usually

*that* of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go.

5 So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by him-

applied to the assaying or refining of metals. Is. 48. 10; Mal. 3. 2, 3. ——¶ *For thee.* God himself knew perfectly beforehand who would stand the test and who would not, but for the satisfaction of Gideon, he would have the trial made in an open and convincing manner.——¶ *Of whom I say unto thee, This shall go*, &c. That is, whom I shall indicate by the result of the experiment, not in express words. We have before remarked of the word 'say,' when applied both to God and men, that it by no means necessarily implies *verbal communication*, but often simply the *mental purpose* of the speaker. Probably a better rendering throughout the clause would be—'*will* go,' '*will* not go,' &c., making the sense rather that of a *prediction*, than of a *command*. In the first instance, the timorous were separated by public proclamation; in the present, the same effect was to be produced by a private signal, understood only by God and his servant Gideon. Multitudes had remained rather than to incur the imputation of cowardice, whom the Most High still saw to be cravens at heart.

5. *Every one that lappeth—as a dog*, &c. The two modes of drinking here described have been differently understood, and the first, in particular, has been the subject of various interpretations. The dog drinks by shaping the end of his long thin tongue into the form of a spoon, which he plies rapidly to and from the water, throwing each time a spoonful of the fluid into his mouth. The human tongue is not adapted to this use; and it is physically impossible, therefore, for a man to lap literally as a dog laps. The true explanation undoubtedly is, that these men, instead of kneeling down to take a long draught, or successive draughts, from the water, employed their hand as the dog employs his tongue,—that is, forming it into a hollow spoon, and dipping water with it from the stream. This mode of drinking is often practised in the East, and practice alone can give that peculiar tact which generally excites the wonder of travellers. The interchange of the hand between the water and the mouth is managed with amazing dexterity, and with nearly or quite as much rapidity as the tongue of the dog in the same act. The water is not *sucked* out of the hand, but by a peculiar jerk, is thrown into the mouth before the hand is brought close to it, so that the hand is approaching with a fresh supply almost before the preceding has been swallowed; which constitutes another resemblance to the action of the dog's tongue. In travelling, when one comes to water and wishes to drink, he cannot well stop the whole party to wait for him, and therefore, if on foot, any delay would oblige him to unusual exertion in order to overtake his party. Therefore he drinks in the manner above

self; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink.

6 And the number of them that lapped, *putting* their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water.

7 And the LORD said unto Gideon, [d] By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the *other* people go every man unto his place.

8 So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets: and he sent all *the rest of* Israel every man unto his tent, and retained those three hundred men. And the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley.

9 ¶ And it came to pass the same [e] night, that the Lord said

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[d] 1 Sam. 14. 6.

[e] Gen. 46. 2, 3.

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described, and satisfies his thirst in much shorter time than would one who should kneel or lie down for the purpose, and indulge himself in a more leisurely draught. This consumes so much time, that few, but those who are mounted, indulge in it, as they can ride on before and satisfy themselves by the time their party comes up; or if behind, can easily overtake them. This explanation will serve to show how the distinction operated, and why those who 'lapped, putting their hand to their mouth,' were considered to evince an alacrity and readiness for action which peculiarly fitted them for the service in which Gideon was engaged.—It may be observed that the original word for *lappeth* (ילק *yalok*,) is precisely the sound which a dog makes in drinking.——¶ *Him shalt thou set by himself.* Heb. תציג *latzig.* As this is the same word with that employed, ch. 7. 37, to signify the *putting by itself* of the fleece, it would seem that that miracle had a designed though latent reference to the two classes of men here distinguished; of whom the one *saturated* themselves with water, while the other, through a commendable hardihood and self-denial, left themselves comparatively *dry.* The reader, however, will exercise his own judgment as to recognizing any such allusion.

7. *Will I save you.* You, the nation; the word being in the plural.

8. *So the people took victuals,* &c. That is, the three hundred who lapped. They took the necessary quantity of victuals for the day's consumption, while the others were dismissed to their tents, i. e. to go where they pleased. It is highly probable, however, that many of them remained within hearing, though at a safe distance, and followed up the blow after the assault had been made and the route commenced by the select band. Those who shun the conflict are often forward to share the victory.——¶ *And retained.* Besides the sense of 'retaining,' the Heb. implies that he clung to them with strong affection and confidence.——¶ *The host of Midian was beneath him in the valley.* In the valley of Jezreel. This circumstance should be particularly noted in connexion with the dream mentioned below.

9. *And it came to pass the same*

unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand.

10 But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host:

11 And thou shalt [f]hear what they say; and afterward shall thine hands be strengthened to go down unto the host. Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that *were* in the host.

12 And the Midianites, and the Amalekites, [g]and all the children of the east, lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels *were* without number, as the sand by the sea-side for multitude.

13 And when Gideon was come, behold, *there was* a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and lo, a cake of barley-bread tumbled into the

[f] ver. 13, 14, 15. See Gen. 24. 14. 1 Sam. 14. 9, 10.

[g] ch. 6. 5, 33, and 8. 10.

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*night*, &c. It should seem that the previous reduction of his numbers had filled Gideon with some secret misgivings. God therefore graciously offered him a farther sign, whereby his faith should be confirmed, and his fear altogether dispelled. This was a sign that should be given him by the enemy themselves. He was to go down with his servant, to the enemy's camp, and hear what they themselves said. The result perfectly satisfied the mind of Gideon; he had no doubt now but that God would fulfil his promise; and in full assurance of faith he instantly arranged everything for the encounter.——¶ *I have delivered it into thine hand.* It is as certain as if it were already done.

10. *Go thou with Phurah thy servant.* Heb. נערך *naarkâ, thy young man.* His being accompanied by his servant would not only tend to diminish his own fears, but their united testimony, as to what they should hear, would confirm the statements made to the people on their return.

11. *Thine hands be strengthened.* Thou shalt be encouraged, emboldened. God, who both inspired the dream and directed Gideon's steps to the spot where he might hear it related, knew perfectly well the effect it would have upon his mind, which he expressly foretels.——¶ *Unto the outside of the armed men.* Heb. ' to the outermost of the ranks by five.' Of this phrase see note on Ex. 13. 18; Josh. 1. 14.

12. *Lay along.* Heb. נפלים *nophelim, were lying fallen;* i. e. lying prostrate and fallen asleep. It does not refer merely to the position they had chosen for their encampment, but to the bodily posture they were actually in at this time. The same phrase occurs in the same sense in the next verse, where mention is made of the prostration of the Midianites' tents.——¶ *Like grasshoppers.* Rather, ' like locusts;' as also ch. 6. 5.——¶ *And their camels.* That these nations, especially Midian, abounded in camels, see Is. 60. 6.

13. *A cake of barley-bread tumbled,* &c. To understand this, it is necessary to revert to the circumstance before mentioned, v. 8, viz. that Gideon's forces were stationed on the

host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it that the tent lay along.

14 And his fellow answered and said, This *is* nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: *for* into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host.

15 ¶ And it was *so*, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the LORD

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hill of Moreh, while the Midianites had pitched below in the valley. The barley-cake which the man saw in his dream, doubtless seemed to roll down the hill into the valley, overturning the tent or tents with which it came in contact. This naturally enough connected it with Gideon, while the apparent inadequacy of the cause to produce this effect would strike the most casual observer. If it had been a great stone, the overturning of tents in its progress would have occasioned no wonder; but that such an effect should be produced by a barley-cake, seemed as little likely in human probability as that Gideon with his little band should overthrow the vast host of Midian. That it was not only a cake, but a *barley*-cake, seems a circumstance designed to show more strongly the insignificance of the cause. The use of barley was gradually superseded by that of wheat, and barley-bread became the food only of the lower orders, of convicts, and of beasts. It was therefore naturally associated with the ideas of dishonor and of insignificance.—— ¶ *Came unto a tent and smote it*, &c. Another instance, as we understand it, of the Heb. usage by which the collect. sing. is employed for the plural. It was not a single tent that was smitten by the rolling cake, and overthrown, but it came among them like a ball among nine-pins, prostrating every thing in its course.

14. *This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon.* That is, this *means* nothing else than the sword, the victorious charge and onset, of Gideon. The interpretation as well as the dream were doubtless both of divine suggestion. 'A wise providence hath prepared a dream in the head of one Midianite, an interpretation in the mouth of another, and hath brought Gideon to be an auditor of both; and hath made his enemies prophets of his victory, encouragers of the attempt, proclaimers of their own confusion!' *Bp. Hall.*——¶ *Delivered Midian and all the host.* Or, Heb. 'delivered Midian, *even* all the host.'

15. *The interpretation thereof.* Heb. שברו *shibro, the breaking thereof;* inasmuch as the *solution* or *explication* of any thing obscure and difficult is like *breaking* the shell of a nut and getting at the kernel within.——¶ *He worshipped.* Bowed himself in a posture of reverence and adoration, and gratefully gave thanks to God for the encouragement he had now been permitted to hear from a source of which he little thought. 'To hear himself called but a barley-cake troubled him not, when he heard withal that his rolling down the hill should break the tents of Midian. It matters not how base we be thought,

hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.

16 And he divided the three hundred men *into* three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers.

17 And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be *that* as I do, so shall ye do.

18 When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that *are* with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, *The sword* of the LORD, and of Gideon.

19 ¶ So Gideon and the hundred men that *were* with him, came unto the outside of the

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so we may be victorious: the soul that hath received full confirmation of God in the assurance of his salvation, cannot but bow the knee, and by gestures of body tell how it is ravished.' *Bp. Hall.*

16. *Into three companies.* Heb. שלשה ראשים *sheloshâh roshim*, *into three heads;* i. e. three grand divisions. So it is said of the rivers of Eden, Gen. 2. 10, that 'they were parted and became into four *heads*,' i. e. four principal or distinguished streams. See note in loc. The design of dividing them in this manner was that they might appear to surround the enemy's camp more entirely, leading them to think that they were environed on every side by a great army.——¶ *Put a trumpet in every man's hand.* Heb. ויתן שופרות ביד כלם *vayittën shophâroth beyad kullâm, gave trumpets into the hand of all of them.*——¶ *Empty pitchers.* Made of earthen ware, so as to be easily broken. They were designed to conceal the lights till the proper time.——¶ *Lamps within the pitchers.* Or, Heb. לפדים *lappidim*, *torches, flambeaux.* Instead of lamps furnished with wicks and fed with oil, we are probably to understand torches made of pitchy or resinous billets of wood, the flame of which was stronger and not so liable to be extinguished by the wind.

17. *Look on me.* Heb. ממני תראו *mimmenu tiru*, *see from me;* i. e. see from me, from my example, what to do yourselves, and when to do it. It is probable that he now unfolded to them minutely every step of the stratagem, so that they could all act in concert when the signal was given, as otherwise the strangeness of the scheme, the darkness of the night, and the distance of the men from each other, would have been apt to render the whole abortive. In these words he is merely agreeing upon the signal.

18. The sword *of the Lord and of Gideon.* Heb. ליהוה ולגדעון *laihovâh ulegidon*, *for the Lord and for Gideon.* The original for 'sword' (חרב *hereb*), is not found in this verse, though it is necessarily implied, and occurs in the parallel passage v. 20. It is inserted, however, in this place in the Chald., Syr., and Arab.; and in eight of Kennicott's and De Rossi's manuscripts; and is probably a genuine reading. This war-cry was taken from the interpretation of the dream, to which Gideon, with his usual modesty and in recognition of his dependence on divine succor, prefixed the name of

camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that *were* in their hands.

20 And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands, to blow *withal*: and they cried, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.

21 And they [h]stood every man in his place round about the camp; [i]and all the host ran, and cried, and fled.

22 And the three hundred [k]blew the trumpets, and [l]the

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[h] Ex. 14. 13, 14. 2 Chron. 20. 17. [i] 2 Kings 7. 7. [k] Josh. 6 4, 16, 20. See 2 Cor. 4. 7. [l] Ps. 83. 9. Isai. 9. 4.

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the Lord—'The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.'

19. *In the beginning of the middle watch.* A little after midnight; for the Hebrews divided the night into three watches. At this time they would naturally be sunk in their profoundest slumbers, and of course be thrown into the utmost confusion on being suddenly awakened.

20. *The three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers,* &c. Every man probably dashing his pitcher against that of his comrade who stood next him. The effect of this, with the intermingled sound of the trumpets and the shouts of the assailants reverberating on every side of the camp, together with the sudden glare of three hundred torches blazing on the scarcely opened eyes of the Midianites, must indeed have been astounding. As the enemy could not imagine that every Israelite had a trumpet and a light, the noise of so many trumpets, the blaze of so many lights, with the crash of the broken pitchers from different quarters, must have conveyed to their minds the most exaggerated ideas of the numbers by which they were beset. Gideon's army would have been great indeed, if, as the Midianites must have supposed, the number of the fighting men had been in proportion to that of the trumpeters. It was mainly in consequence of this erroneous impression that the stratagem succeeded as it did.

21. *Stood every man in his place.* Thus the host of Midian was discomfited without the Israelites striking a blow. They stood unmoved in their places, blowing their trumpets and holding their torches, as if to encourage and give light to countless numbers of fighting men behind, while in fact they afforded light to the Midianites to slay each other, though not enough to enable them to distinguish friend from foe.——¶*All the host ran,* &c. That is, ran about the camp, hither and thither, in wild confusion, pursuing and pursued by their own men. The 'running' was thus distinguished from the 'fleeing,' which was nothing else than the attempt to escape from the place of their encampment. The panic was no doubt greatly increased by the alarm and fright of their numerous camels.

22. *Fled to Bethshittah,* &c. The names of these places occur not elsewhere in the Scriptures, except that of Abel-Meholah, which was in the half-tribe of Manasseh on this side Jordan. As the Midianites would naturally strike towards the Jordan

LORD set [m]every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host: and the host fled to Beth-shittah in Zererath, *and* to the border of Abel-meholah, unto Tabbath.

23 And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all Manasseh, and pursued after the Midianites.

24 ¶ And Gideon sent messengers throughout all [n]mount Ephraim, saying, Come down against the Midianites, and take before them the waters unto Beth-barah and Jordan. Then all the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and [o]took the waters unto [p]Beth-barah and Jordan.

25 And they took [q]two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb; and they slew Oreb upon [r]the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the wine-press of Zeeb,

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[m] 1 Sam. 14. 20. 2 Chron. 20. 23. [n] ch. 3. 27.

[o] ch. 3. 28. [p] John 1. 28. [q] ch. 8. 3. Ps. 83. 11. [r] Isai. 10. 26.

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to cross over into their own country, the other places here mentioned were doubtless in that direction from the plain of Jezreel.

23. *The men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali,* &c. Including probably numbers of the two and twenty thousand who had previously withdrawn themselves, or been dismissed by Gideon as lacking the requisite degree of hardihood and courage for the impending conflict. Now, however, when bolder spirits had made the onset and put the enemy to flight, they are ready to join in the pursuit. But though their timidity in the former instance was not to their credit, we do not know that their neutrality on this occasion would have been guiltless. It was probably their duty to come forward to the aid of their brethren and help them to a complete victory.

24. *Take before them the waters.* Take possession of the fords of whatever streams may lie in their route, but more especially of the fords of the Jordan, to prevent their escaping into their own country. The 'waters' and the 'Jordan' are expressly distinguished, nor can they properly be considered the same, as is done by many commentators. The copulative 'and,' may be regarded here, as often elsewhere in the Scriptures, as a particle of distinction;—'occupy all the fords that lie in the way till they come to Beth-barah, but *above all* those of the Jordan;' or with Rosenmüller, we may render, 'Unto Beth-barah, *even* Jordan.' The same precaution was taken before in the case of the Moabites, ch. 3. 28, and was the usual practice when the enemy belonged to the country east of the river. The Beth-barah here spoken of is probably the same with that mentioned John 1. 28, where the Hebrews forded Jordan under the direction of Joshua.

25. *Slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb,* &c. These two Midianitish leaders had taken shelter, one in the cavern of a rock, the other in the vat of a wine-press; both of which places were afterwards, from this circumstance, called by their names; of which Oreb signifies a *raven,* and Zeeb, a *wolf.* Among ancient nations, generals and princes often took the

and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the [s] other side Jordan.

[s] ch. 8. 4.

## CHAPTER VIII.

AND [a] the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast

[a] See ch. 12. 1. 2 Sam. 19. 41.

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names of birds and beasts. Thus, among the Romans, we find Gracchus, *a jackdaw*, Corvinus, *a crow*, Aquilinus, *an eagle*, &c.——¶ *And pursued Midian.* Rather, Heb. וירדפו אל מדין *yirdephu el Midyân, pursued unto Midian*, i. e. to the country of Midian, to their own borders on the other side of the Jordan. And if they crossed the river in the pursuit, why should they not have followed them to their own territories, which lay near to the Jordan?——¶ *Brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon.* It was anciently, and is still an almost universal custom with eastern nations to take off the heads of opposing chiefs and bring them to the victorious general. It is a sort of trophy, and has been regarded as such, at one time or other, in nearly all nations. David cut off the head of Goliath, probably intending to bring it to Saul; and the head of Saul himself was cut off by the Philistines, and sent by them to their own country. At present the heads of conquered chiefs and commanders are transmitted to Constantinople from the most distant parts of the Turkish empire, to be laid at the feet of the Sultan, and then to decorate his palace gates. It is, however, to be presumed that the sentiments of a more refined civilisation, and the silently meliorating influences of Christianity will ere long banish all traces of such atrocious barbarity from the earth. From the foregoing interesting narrative respecting Gideon and his wonderful deliverance, we may learn, (1) To undertake nothing in our own strength. (2) To draw back from nothing to which we are called. (3) To doubt of nothing wherein God promises his aid. (4) To take the glory of nothing which God does by us.

## CHAPTER VIII.

1. *And the men of Ephraim.* Heb. איש אפרים *ish Ephrayim, and the man, or manhood, of Ephraim*; i. e. the leading men, the elders. See on Josh. 9. 6. This complaint was probably uttered when the heads of the two slain princes of Midian were brought to Gideon, but whether this was before or after his crossing the Jordan, it is not easy to say. It is not determined by the expression, 'on the other side Jordan,' ch. 7. 25, for this phrase in the original (מעבר לירדן) signifies either *this* side or *that*, as the case may be. The probability, however, we think is, that our translation has correctly rendered it 'from the other side,' and that Gideon had now passed the Jordan, but that the incident here related comes in somewhat by anticipation, in order that what relates to the Ephraimites might be finished without hereafter interrupting the thread of the narrative. The interview here mentioned, we suppose to have taken place *after* Gideon's return from the pursuit of the Midianites, v. 4.——¶ *Why hast thou served us thus.* Heb. מה הדבר הזה עשית לנו *mâh haddâbâr hazzeh asithâ lânu, what thing is this thou hast*

thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? and they did chide with him sharply.

2 And he said unto them, What have I done now in comparison of you? *Is* not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abi-ezer?

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*done unto us?*——¶ *And thou calledst us not*, &c. Rather, '*that* thou calledst us not.' Although the victory of Gideon, by freeing them from the tyranny of Midian, had been of equal advantage to them with the rest of their brethren, yet from not having been sharers in the glory of it, this tribe was ill-affected in view of the result. The pique which is here expressed seems to have originated in a prior state of jealous feeling, existing on the part of Ephraim, towards Manasseh. Ephraim was brother to Manasseh, the tribe from which Gideon sprung, and, probably, priding themselves on the pre-eminence assigned them in the blessing of Jacob and Moses, on the descent of Joshua from their tribe, on their having the tabernacle fixed in their inheritance, and on their superior numbers, they seem to have indulged a very bitter spirit of rivalry towards their brethren. Hence the allusion elsewhere, Is. 9. 21, to the envy and mutual disaffection of these two tribes. In the present instance, their complaint was evidently unjust, as Gideon had acted throughout under divine direction, instead of ordering the services of the tribes, at his own discretion. Moreover, if so disposed, they had the amplest opportunities to signalize themselves in behalf of the common interest. They knew their country was suffering under foreign oppression, and that forces were raising with a view to resist it and shake off the yoke. What then prevented them from nobly coming forward and volunteering in the enterprise? But such is the perverse temperament of some men, that under the influence of a morbid and envious spirit, they construe every exaltation of their neighbor, as an injury done to themselves; and nothing is more common than for those who will not attempt or venture anything in the cause of God, to be ready to censure those who show more zeal and enterprise than themselves. How often, too, when the danger is past, does the coward vaunt his courage! The conduct of the Ephraimites on this, and another occasion very similar, which resulted in the slaughter of two and forty thousand of their number, ch. 12. 1–7, evinces that they were a people of rash, hasty, and impetuous spirit, and the incidents mentioned afford a striking illustration of two emphatic declarations of Scripture. (1) That, 'only by pride cometh contention;' and, (2) That, 'for every right work a man is envied of his neighbor.'——¶ *Did chide with him sharply.* Heb. בחזקה *behâzekâh*, *strongly, with vehemence.*

2. *Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better*, &c. A metaphorical and proverbial mode of commending the smallest action of one as superior to the greatest of another; or of saying that the Ephraimites, by intercepting the enemy at the fords of Jordan, and slaying the two

princes of the Midianites, had achieved more than Gideon and his army. The answer was admirably adapted to soothe the exasperated spirits of his accusers; it was the soft answer which turneth away wrath. However much we may be disposed to admire great military exploits, and to account men honorable, in proportion to the victories they have gained; there is a victory over ourselves that far more dignifies a man, than the most extended conquests over others; and we cannot but regard Gideon's defeat of the Midianitish host, with so small a force, as less worthy of admiration, than the self-possession he exercised towards the offended and reviling Ephraimites. 'He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.' Thus does Solomon weigh, in an even balance, the different characters above alluded to. Not a word of recrimination dropped from the mouth of Gideon. Though he might, perhaps, have justly said, that when the Ephraimites knew his determination to oppose the Midianites, they had never offered their services, or come forward to assist him; but when the danger was over, they were ready to impute evils to him for omissions, which were chargeable only on themselves. But, instead of loading his adversaries with blame, or glancing at anything that might either betray irritation in his mind, or strengthen it in theirs, he is glad to search out causes of commendation. He magnifies their performance, and gives them the credit of doing more in the pursuit, *in their gleanings*, than he in the battle, *the vintage of Abi-ezer*. Instead, moreover, of saying, 'If God has been pleased to honor me, why should that be an offence to you?' he wisely forbore to take to himself the credit that he justly might, thus hiding from them the light that pained their eyes, and casting a veil over the actions that had provoked their jealousy. A striking instance this, of the 'charity which vaunteth not itself, which seeketh not her own.' His conduct naturally leads to the remark, (1) That the only way to appease unreasonable wrath is by curbing, in the spirit of meekness and forbearance, the outbreak of a kindred passion in ourselves. Yielding pacifieth great offences. (2) True humility not only sheds a double lustre over all our gifts, graces, and attainments, but is a disposition tending no less to the preservation of our own happiness, than to the conciliation of those who are offended at us; for if once willing to forego the honor to which we are entitled, it will appear a small thing to us to be censured without a cause; seeing that such censures only reduce us to the place which we were previously, in our own minds, disposed to occupy. And it will almost invariably be found true, that as men are ready to hate those who arrogate honor to themselves, so will they be more easily reconciled to those who are humble and unassuming.——¶ *Better than the vintage of Abi-ezer*. That is, of the Manassites, from whom the family of Abi-ezer, to which Gideon belonged, descended. Chald. 'Are not the feeble of the house of Ephraim better than the strong of the house of Abi-ezer?'

3. *Their anger was abated*. Heb. רפתה רוחם *râphethâh ruhâm*, *their spirit relaxed*, *remitted itself from*

3 [b] God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their [c] anger was abated toward him, when he had said that.

4 ¶ And Gideon came to Jordan, *and* passed over, he, and the three hundred men that *were* with him, faint, yet pursuing *them*.

5 And he said unto the men of [d] Succoth, Give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me: for they *be* faint, and I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian.

6 ¶ And the princes of Succoth said, [e] *Are* the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that [f] we should give bread unto thine army?

*him.* How powerful to blunt the edge of other men's displeasure is a conduct conformed to the Scriptural precept, 'Let nothing be done through strife and vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves.'

4. *Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over.* Or, Heb. רבא *yâbo, had passed over.* See on v. 1. What is related in the preceding verses seems to be by anticipation.——¶ *Faint, yet pursuing.* Much fatigued with what they had already accomplished, yet eager to follow up the blow, and determined not to give over till the victory was perfectly achieved. This is often the Christian's case in the prosecution of his spiritual warfare. His 'mortal spirit tires and faints,' yet he struggles on with the little strength that still remains to him, leaning upon omnipotence, and resolved to conquer or die.

5. *He said unto the men of Succoth.* From this we learn the precise spot where Gideon crossed the Jordan. It was at the point where the Jordan emerges from the Lake of Genesaret, for near to this, on the east side of the river, in the tribe of Gad, lay the city of Succoth, i. e. *of tents*, or *booths*, so called from Jacob's having here pitched his *tents* on his removal from Mesopotamia, Gen. 43. 17. As Gideon was now engaged in the common cause of Israel, he had a right to expect succor from the people at large. This claim he hints at in the close of the verse.——¶ *The people that follow me.* Heb. אשר ברגלי *asher beraglai, that are at my feet.* See on ch. 4. 10.

6. *And the princes of Succoth said, &c.* The verb in the singular, the noun in the plural, intimating that some one spoke in the name of the rest; or, perhaps, rather that they were all unanimous in this reply, as if they had been but one man speaking with one mouth. Comp. Num. 32. 25. It may seem scarcely credible that the inhabitants of Succoth and Peniel should refuse bread to their famished brethren; but having been seven years under the domination of the Midianites, to whom they lived contiguous, they doubtless not only dreaded their vengeance, but deemed it highly improbable that Gideon should succeed.——¶ *Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in*

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[b] ch. 7. 24, 25. Phil. 2. 3. [c] Prov. 15. 1.

[d] Gen. 33. 17. Ps. 60. 6. [e] See 1 Kings 20. 11. [f] See 1 Sam. 25. 11.

7 And Gideon said, Therefore when the LORD hath delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into mine hand, [g] then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers.

8 ¶ And he went up thence [h] to Penuel, and spake unto them likewise: and the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered *him*.

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[g] ver. 16.

[h] Gen. 32. 30. 1 Kings 12. 25.

*thine hand?* Are their hands bound behind them as captive prisoners, indicating that their persons are entirely in thy power? A bitter and malignant taunt, as if he were celebrating a triumph before he had obtained the victory. 'To have questioned so sudden a victory, had been pardonable; but to deny it scornfully was unworthy of Israelites. Carnal men think that impossible to others, which they themselves cannot do; hence their censures, hence their exclamations.' *Bp. Hall.* How often, too, do those from whom we might reasonably look for the most cordial assistance, seek, like the men of Succoth, to weaken our hands and discourage our hearts?

7. *I will tear your flesh with the thorns*, &c. Or, Heb. דשתי *dashti*, *will thresh.* The threat probably relates to a cruel method of torture used in those times, for putting captives to death, by laying briers and thorns on their naked bodies, and then drawing over them some heavy implements of husbandry. The opinion of Drusius, that persons put to death in this manner were laid naked on thorns and briers, and then both crushed and trampled together, seems to be confirmed by the force of the preposition in the original (את), which, like the Latin *cum*, properly imports 'together with,' *una cum*, rather than 'by.' Chald. 'I will mangle your flesh upon the thorns, and upon the briers.' 'Thus did Gideon threaten the inhabitants of Succoth; and thus do masters, fathers, and schoolmasters, swear they will punish those who have offended them. To see the force of the figure, it must be kept in mind that the people (in the East) are almost in a state of nudity. To tear a man's naked body, therefore, with briers and thorns, would be no small punishment. See poor travellers, sometimes, who, in consequence of a wild beast, or some other cause, have to rush into the thicket; before they can get out again, in consequence of thorns, they are literally covered with blood. There have been instances where a master, in his anger, has taken a jagged edge of the palmirah branch, to tear the naked body of his slave, and nothing can be more common than to threaten it shall be done to those who have given offence. People also often menace each other with the repetition of the old punishment of tying the naked body in a bundle of thorns, and rolling it on the ground.' *Roberts.* See farther respecting this punishment on v. 16.

8. *Went up thence to Penuel.* A city also in the tribe of Gad near the brook Jabbok, and not far from Succoth; so called by Jacob for the reason mentioned Gen. 32. 30, 31.—— ¶ *Spake unto them likewise.* That is, he made the same request to them that he had to the men of Succoth.

9 And he spake also unto the men of Penuel, saying, When I [i]come again in peace, [k]I will break down this tower.

10 ¶ Now Zebah and Zalmunna *were* in Karkor, and their hosts with them, about fifteen thousand *men*, all that were left of [l]all the hosts of the children of the east: for there fell an hundred and twenty thousand men that drew sword.

11 ¶ And Gideon went up by the way of them that dwelt in tents on the east of [m]Nobah and Jogbehah, and smote the host: for the host was [n]secure.

12 And when Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued after them, and [o]took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and discomfited all the host.

13 ¶ And Gideon the son of Joash returned from battle before the sun *was up*,

14 And caught a young man of the men of Succoth, and in-

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[i] 1 Kings 22. 27. [k] ver. 17. [l] ch. 7. 12.

[m] Num. 32. 35. 42. [n] ch. 18. 27. 1 Thess. 5. 3. [o] Ps. 83. 11.

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9. *When I come again in peace.* That is, according to the Heb. idiom, when I return in soundness, in safety, in triumph; as his strong faith assured him would be the case. He defers the intended vengeance for the present, for fear of losing time in the pursuit, and perhaps from a secret hope that they might upon farther reflection repent of their refusal, and atone for it by sending succors and supplies after him.——¶ *I will break down this tower.* They had probably, on giving their answer, pointed insultingly to a tower in which their chief defence lay, and intimated to him that he might do his worst, for they could amply defend themselves.

10. *In Karkor.* A town near the east frontiers of Gad, and at no great distance from the source of the small river Jabbok. It is no where else mentioned.

11. *By the way of them that dwelt in tents.* Probably he took an unwonted and unsuspected route along the territories of the Scenite or *tent-dwelling* Arabs. Chald. 'Gideon went up by the way of the camps of the Arabians, who dwell in tents in the desert.' Schmid, however, thinks the allusion is to a portion of the trans-jordanic Israelites who followed the nomade mode of life in these regions, as the Arabs in the neighborhood of Midian, being among the 'sons of the East,' may be supposed more likely to have been confederate with them in the expedition, and not disposed to let Gideon pass peaceably through their borders.——¶ *The host was secure.* Heb. המחנה ההריד *hammahanëh heherid*, *the host was become security;* not only secure, but in their own estimation, security itself.

13. *Before the sun was up.* More correctly rendered according to the Heb. מלמעלה החרס *milmaalëh hëhâres*, *from the ascent or height of Heres.* This rendering is confirmed by the Septuagint, the Syriac, and the Arabic. The original 'Heres' is never used for 'sun' except in the poetical style, Job 9. 7, while express mention is made of mount Heres, ch. 1. 35. The writer's drift is probably to intimate that Gideon returned by a different route from that by which he went.

quired of him: and he described unto him the princes of Succoth, and the elders thereof, *even* threescore and seventeen men.

15 And he came unto the men of Succoth, and said, Behold Zebah and Zalmunna, with whom ye did [p] upbraid me, saying, *Are* the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thy men *that are* weary?

16 [q] And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness, and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth.

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[p] ver. 6.

[q] ver. 7.

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44. *He described unto him.* Heb. ויכתב אליו *va-yiktob ëlauv, he wrote for him.* He gave the names in writing of seventy persons, the chief men of Succoth, who were most concerned in refusing him and his men the refreshment he requested.——¶ *And the elders thereof. Even* the elders thereof. The princes and the elders were the same persons.

16. *He took—thorns and briers of the wilderness, and with them he taught the men of Succoth.* Heb. ידע *yōdda, made to know.* He made them sensible of their crime and folly; in other words, he punished them by putting them to death by this mode of torture. This is to be inferred from the fact that their offence was the same as that of the men of Penuel, whom he certainly did put to death. The probability is that their naked bodies were laid in the midst of a heap of thorns, briers, and prickly brush, and then threshing sledges or other heavy implements of husbandry were drawn over them. In northern nations, where the body is completely covered, the idea of such punishments with thorns on the naked person, seems a far-fetched device; but in the East, where the clothing leaves much more of the person exposed, and where, in consequence, men are continually lacerating their skins in passing through thickets, &c., the idea of such laceration is always kept present either by the actual experience of suffering, or by the constant observation of it. Hence tearing the flesh with thorns comes to be a familiar idea of penal infliction, and, as such, is popularly mentioned as among the punishments which evil-doers deserve, or will obtain, not only in this life, but in the life to come.—The punishment, it must be acknowledged, was severe, but the provocation was great. Considered as an act of ingratitude and inhumanity only, it was exceedingly sinful; for what could be more base than to refuse a meal to those who had, at the peril of their own lives, delivered the whole nation from the yoke of Midian; and were now, though only three hundred in number, following the remaining fugitives, fifty times as numerous as themselves, in order to extirpate them entirely? Had they been mere strangers and travellers in distress, their request would have been reasonable, and a refusal barbarous; but considering that they were their own countrymen, and fighting their country's battles under the special calling and direction of Heaven, it was treason of the blackest dye; it was the very way to prevent the execution of the divine purposes, and if God had not miracu-

17 [r]And he beat down the tower of [s]Penuel, and slew the men of the city.

18 ¶ Then said he unto Zebah and Zalmunna, What manner of men *were they* whom ye slew at [t]Tabor? And they answered, As thou *art*, so *were* they; each one resembled the children of a king.

r ver. 9. s 1 Kings 12. 25.

t ch. 4. 6. Ps. 89. 12.

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lously renewed the strength of the visitors, this refusal of food to them would have done more to vanquish them than all the hosts of Midian had been able to effect. But they added insult to injury; they endeavored to weaken his hands by deriding the vanity of his attempts; they answered him in a tone of bantering and scorn, and thus poured contempt upon a cause which, being of God, was thereby rendered sacred. So that taking all things into view, it cannot be questioned that Gideon did right in making a fearful example of such wicked traitors. The whole of this remarkable transaction tends to inspire us with confidence in God, and to encourage our exertions in his cause; but there are two lessons especially which we shall do well to learn from it; (1) To prosecute our spiritual warfare under all discouragements ourselves; and (2) To be careful to put no discouragements in the way of others. God is indignant with those who would weaken the hands of his people. His command is, 'Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees; say unto them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not; your God will come and help you.'

18. *What manner of men* were they *whom ye slew at Tabor?* This question relates to an occurrence not previously mentioned, but the inference is, that these uterine or full brothers of Gideon, during the seven years' oppression of Midian, when the children of Israel had been compelled to make themselves dens in the mountains, ch. 6. 2, had taken shelter in mount Tabor, where they were found by these two kings and barbarously massacred in cold blood. It may be that the event had occurred but a short time before during Gideon's absence, and that he had merely heard a confused account of it; still it is not clear, simply from the interrogative form of the address, that Gideon was uncertain whether his brethren had perished by the hand of these two princes. He may have put the question, in order to draw the acknowledgment of the deed from their own lips, and thus make his justice in their punishment more conspicuous. It should not be forgotten that the day is coming when *every* secret thing will be brought to light, and such conviction flash on the offenders that they will no longer be able to conceal their guilt.——¶ *Each one resembled the children of a king.* This is an Orientalism still in use. Of a person who is beautiful or of a fair complexion, who is courageous, and stately in his gait, it is said in the East, 'He is like the son of a king;' 'He is the son of a god.' In the measures of comparison, the king and that which belongs to him, forms the superlative degree, and to say that a person or thing is kingly, or like that which belongs to a king, is to say that it is the most excellent of

19 And he said, They *were* my brethren, *even* the sons of my mother: *as* the LORD liveth, if ye had saved them alive, I would not slay you.

20 And he said unto Jether his first-born, Up, *and* slay them. But the youth drew not his sword: for he feared, because he *was* yet a youth.

21 Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, Rise thou, and fall upon us: for as the man *is, so is* his strength. And Gideon arose,

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its kind. From the reports of travellers it would appear, that in some way or other, the royal families in the East are usually remarkable for the beauty and majesty of their persons; so that the comparison is something more than a mere complimentary phrase.

19. *My brethren*, even *the sons of my mother*. In countries where polygamy is tolerated, the ties of brotherhood are, as might be expected, much more close and tender between those who are born of the same mother, than those who are connected only as the children of the same father. Of this we have had and shall have ample evidence in the sacred history. This explains why 'son of my mother' was among the Hebrews, as now among the Arabs and others, a far more endearing expression than that of 'my brother,' in the general sense.——¶ *I would not slay you.* Which he was not bound to do, inasmuch as they were not Canaanites.

20. *Up, and slay them.* The Hebrews had no executioner. When a man was guilty of homicide, the execution devolved on the next of kin, by right of blood-revenge; in other cases criminals were stoned by the people, the witnesses setting the example: and when a king or chief ordered a person to be put to death, the office was performed by the person to whom the command was given. And this was generally a person whose consideration in life bore some proportion to that of the person to be slain. In fact, the office even of a regular executioner, is not by any means dishonorable in the East. The post of chief executioner is, in most Oriental courts, one of honor and distinction. When thus there was no regular executioner, it came to be considered a sort of honor to put a distinguished person to death; and, on the other hand, the death itself was honorable in proportion to the rank of the personage by whom the blow was inflicted. It was the greatest dishonor to perish by the hands of a woman or a slave. We see this feeling distinctly in the present narrative, where the two princes much prefer to die by Gideon's own hand than by that of a youth who had obtained no personal distinction. As to the hero's commissioning his son to perform this office, it was perhaps partly to honor him with the distinction of having slain two chief enemies of Israel; as well as because the rules of blood-revenge made it necessary that the execution of those who had slain his own brethren, should either be performed by himself, or by a member of his own family.

21. *As the man is, so is his strength.* His strength is proportionate to his age, and therefore they would sooner be dispatched, and with less pain, by Gideon than by a youth.——¶ *Took*

and [u]slew Zebah and Zalmunna, and took away the ornaments that *were* on their camels' necks.

22 ¶ Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian.

23 And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: [x] the LORD shall rule over you.

24 ¶ And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that you would give me every man the ear-rings of his prey. (For they had golden ear-rings, [y] because they *were* Ishmaelites.)

[u] Ps. 83. 11.

[x] 1 Sam. 8. 7, and 10. 19, and 12. 12. [y] Gen. 25. 13, and 37. 25, 28.

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*away the ornaments that were on their camels' necks.* Heb. השהרנים *hassaharonim, little moons, crescents.* Probably shining plates of gold or other metal in the form of crescents suspended from the camels' necks, and hanging down upon their breasts in front. The heads, necks, bodies, and legs, of camels, horses, and elephants, are still highly ornamented in Eastern countries.

22. *Rule thou over us*, &c. That is, they would have him to be king; and here it is that the Hebrews first betray a desire to establish a hereditary kingdom, forgetting the peculiar character of their government, and the high distinction which they enjoyed in having Jehovah for their king. But the pious hero himself was mindful of it, replying in the true spirit of the theocracy, 'I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you, the Lord shall rule over you.' Gideon, in modestly and piously declining the proposal, acted with a moderation and wisdom worthy of himself. He would do nothing that seemed to trench upon the divine prerogative. Though he would serve them as a judge, he would not rule over them as a king. His decision showed how much he had in subjection the motives which usually prevail with men. The ambition of exalting a family is a great snare; but a true patriot, who aims not at his own, but the public good, will decline rather than seek those honors, and rest satisfied with deserving well of his country, without aspiring to rule it. All his sons, however, were not of his mind, and did not forget this offer, as will appear in the sequel.

24. *That ye would give me every man the ear-rings of his prey.* Or, Heb. איש נזם שללו *ish nëzem shelâlo, every man an ear-ring of his prey.* The word in the original is in the singular, and it seems more likely that Gideon would have requested a moderate contribution from each man, than that he should have demanded *all* the jewels of this kind which fell to the share of his followers, and which perhaps constituted the most valuable portion of their prey. The request of Gideon, though doubtless well intended, was certainly unfortunate in its results, as the sequel clearly proves. On the true import of נזם here rendered *ear-ring*, see on Gen 24. 22.——¶ *Because they were Ishmaelites.* The Midianites were not properly Ishmaelites, being

25 And they answered, We will willingly give *them.* And they spread a garment, and did cast therein every man the ear-rings of his prey.

26 And the weight of the golden ear-rings that he requested, was a thousand and seven hundred *shekels* of gold; beside ornaments, and collars, and purple raiment that *was* on the kings of Midian, and beside the chains that *were* about their camels' necks.

27 And Gideon [z] made an ephod

[z] ch. 17. 5.

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descended from another son of Abraham; but from being much intermixed with them, from following the same mode of life, and possessing the same general manners, they might well be so called. Indeed the terms 'Ishmaelites,' and 'Midianites,' seem to have been used interchangeably from a very early period, Gen. 38. 25. Probably all those eastern kindred tribes whose way of life was similar, and were much mixed with the Arabians, were called Ishmaelites in a general sense. It is also probable that large numbers of real Ishmaelites acted with the Midianites on this occasion, and Boothroyd would restrict the words of the text to these:—'Those slain, who were Ishmaelites, wore golden pendants.' In consequence of Mohammed's having prohibited rings of gold, the modern Arabs do not exhibit such costly ornaments as the ancient Midianites.

25. *We will willingly give.* Heb. נתון נתן *nathēn nittēn, giving we will give.* The same feelings which had just before prompted them to offer him a crown, undoubtedly disposed them now to comply with his request, with the utmost readiness. Though he asked but a single article from each, yet from the total amount of the donation, it would seem that in giving many of them went beyond the letter of his request, and threw in a number.

26. *And the weight—was a thousand and seven hundred* shekels *of gold.* Taking the shekel at half an ounce weight, the sum of the gold collected in ear-rings was seventy-three pounds four ounces; and worth, as gold now rates, upwards of twelve thousand dollars.——¶ *Ornaments.* The same word as that applied to the 'ornaments' of the camels, v. 21, and probably denoting articles of the same form and material.——¶ *Collars.* Rather, as the original נטיפות *nettephōth*, comes from נטף *nâtaph, to drop, to distil by drops*, ear-drops, or pendants of pearl, from their form. ——¶ *Purple.* See on Ex. 35. 35. The present is the first indication of purple as a royal color.

27. *Gideon made an ephod thereof.* An ephod was a vestment covering the shoulders and extending over the breast, somewhat like a coat without sleeves. There were two kinds of them; one, a rich garment, peculiar to the high priest, made of blue, purple, scarlet, and twined linen, curiously wrought, and embroidered with gold. In this was set the breastplate studded with precious stones, and containing the Urim and Thummim, by which the high priest consulted the will of Jehovah, Ex. 25. 7; 28. 4. The other was made after the same model, but of inferior materials, being composed simply of fine linen, and worn not only by the priests, but

thereof, and put it in his city, *even* [a]in Ophrah: and all Israel [b]went thither a whoring after it: which thing became [c]a snare unto Gideon, and to his house.

28 ¶ Thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted up their heads no more. [d] And the coun-

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[a] ch. 6. 24. [b] Ps. 106. 39. [c] Deut. 7. 16.

[d] ch. 5. 31.

by the Levites and others in divine ministrations, as we see from the case of Samuel, 1 Sam. 2. 18, and of David, 1 Sam. 17. 16, neither of whom belonged to the sacerdotal order. The ephod made by Gideon was undoubtedly designed to be of the former kind, and was thus wrought with great splendor. His real motive in this transaction is not very easily determined. Some think the ephod was designed merely as a commemorative trophy of Israel's deliverance; but, if so, it was a very strange one, having no conceivable relation to such an event. The more probable opinion undoubtedly is, that it was intended wholly for a religious use. Gideon had, at his first calling, been instructed to build an altar and offer sacrifice. This perhaps induced him to think himself authorized to officiate in the same way, occasionally, at his own house, and as he knew that an ephod was a usual appendage to such an office, he might have had one formed and finished in sumptuous style for this purpose. If this be the right conjecture, the worship performed was doubtless in honor of the true God, but it was still unauthorized and improper, however he may have considered the first commission as constituting a good warrant for his continuing the service. Even in his life-time, it unquestionably had the effect of withdrawing the attention of the people, east of the Jordan, from the tabernacle at Shiloh, and so far tended to pave the way for that decline into positive idolatry, which took place after his death.——¶ *All Israel went thither*, &c. They made it a means of practising superstition and idolatry; they resorted to this, instead of the true ephod, to inquire the will of God; thus gradually forsaking the place which Jehovah himself had ordained as the one seat of worship To such disastrous consequences may one false step of a good man lead, who fails to weigh well the issues of his best meant conduct. The following suggestions naturally arise from the narrative. (1) In God's worship human inventions are to be most carefully avoided, and the inspired word strictly adhered to. (2) What may be indifferent or innocent to one man may, to a weaker brother, be a dangerous snare. (3) The beginning of sin is as the letting out of water. From small beginnings arose all the present horrid idolatry of the church of Rome.——¶ *Became a snare unto Gideon and to his house.* That is, became not only a source of evil personally to Gideon, enticing his affections from the proper object, and abating his zeal for the true worship of God in his old age, but proving the occasion of sin and ruin to his family, as appears from the ensuing chapter.

28. *They lifted up their heads no more.* Recovered not their former strength or spirit; were not in a

try was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon.

29 ¶ And Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house.

30 And Gideon had [e] threescore and ten sons of his body begotten: for he had many wives.

31 [f] And his concubine that *was* in Shechem, she also bare him a son, whose name he called Abimelech.

32 ¶ And Gideon the son of Joash died [g] in a good old age, and was buried in the sepulchre of Joash his father, [h] in Ophrah of the Abi-ezrites.

33 And it came to pass [i] as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel turned again, and [k] went a whoring after Baalim, [l] and made Baal-berith their god.

34 And the children of Israel [m] remembered not the LORD their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side:

35 [n] Neither showed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, *namely*, Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had showed unto Israel.

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[e] ch. 9. 2, 5. [f] ch. 9. 1. [g] Gen. 25. 8. Job 5. 26. [h] ver. 27. ch. 6. 24.

[i] ch. 2. 19. [k] ch. 2. 17. [l] ch. 9. 4. 46. [m] Ps. 78. 11, 42, and 106. 13, 21. [n] ch. 9. 16, 17, 18. Eccles. 9. 14, 15.

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condition again to invade or annoy the Israelites in their possessions.——¶ *In quietness forty years in the days of Gideon.* While Gideon lived. The forty years are perhaps to be dated from the defeat of the Midianites, and the consequent complete recovery of the national liberty.

30. *Of his body begotten.* Heb. יוצאי ירכו *yotzeë yëreko*, *coming out of his thigh.* Intimating they were his own natural sons, sons by generation, and not by adoption.

31. *His concubine that* was *in Shechem.* A lawful, but secondary wife, whose children could not inherit. See on Gen. 16. 1–3.——¶ *Whose name he called Abimelech.* Heb. וישם את שמו אבימלך *yâsem eth shemo Abimelek*, *whose name he set, put, appointed, Abimelech.* The name properly signifies, 'father—king,' and was perhaps conferred out of complaisance to his concubine, who may have desired it from ambitious motives. The incident certainly proved of evil omen, whether Abimelech was prompted to the course he pursued by reflecting upon the import of his name or not. The influence of names, in the formation of character, is probably much greater than is usually imagined, and deserves the special attention of parents in their bestowment. Children should be taught that the circumstance of their bearing the names of good men or women, who have lived before them, constitutes an obligation upon them to imitate and perpetuate their virtues.

33. *Baal-Berith.* That is, *The Lord of the covenant*; so called, perhaps, from his being considered the deity that presided over compacts, leagues, treaties, covenants, &c., especially to avenge the violation of them.

34, 35. *Remembered not the Lord their God,—Neither showed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal.* On the two concluding verses of this

## CHAPTER IX.

AND Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem unto [a]his mother's brethren, and communed with them, and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying,

2 Speak, I pray you, in the ears of all the men of Shechem, Whether *is* better for you, either that all the sons of Jerubbaal, *which are* [b]three-score and ten persons, reign over you, or that one reign over you? remember also that I *am* [c]your bone and your flesh.

[a] ch. 8. 31.

[b] ch. 8. 30. [c] Gen. 29. 14.

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chapter, we have simply to remark, (1) That they who are kept from evil, not so much by their own choice as by the restraint of others, will, like the slackened bow, start aside the moment the string is loosed. (2) We are not to wonder if they are ungrateful to us, who show themselves destitute of all gratitude towards God.

## CHAPTER IX.

1. *Abimelech—went to Shechem.* As Shechem was a city of note in the tribe of Ephraim, and the Ephraimites appear to have been a rash, high-spirited, and excitable people, particularly jealous of their brethren of Manasseh, and perhaps still cherishing the memory of the fancied slight put upon them by Gideon, ch. 8. 1-3, Abimelech, no doubt, promised himself, on this ground, the speedy concurrence of the Shechemites in his infamous designs. But his first step was to enlist his relatives in his interest, and with this view he applies himself to them, undoubtedly, with all the arts of an aspiring demagogue.

2. *The men of Shechem.* Heb. 'the masters of Shechem;' implying perhaps the leading men, though not necessarily confined to this sense.—— ¶ *Whether is better*, &c. Heb. 'what is good? whether the ruling over you of seventy persons,' &c. From the authority and influence which Gideon had possessed, and from the acknowledged dignity of his family, the presumption would naturally be, that if the reins of government were to be lodged in any hands, it would be in those of some one of his sons, or of all of them conjointly. On this hypothesis Abimelech builds his project. But his words convey a slanderous insinuation which is not obvious to the English reader. He speaks of Gideon's sons 'reigning' (משל *mâshal*,) or exercising *domination* over their countrymen, whereas it was just this species of rule which Gideon so expressly rejected both for himself and his sons, ch. 8. 23, as invading the prerogative of the Most High; being content with the inferior degree of authority usually indicated by the term שפט *shâphat*, *to judge*. Nor is there any evidence, that either of his sons had the least intention of assuming a despotic sway over their brethren. But Abimelech's conduct, in this particular, affords but another proof that he who has a wicked purpose to serve will not stick at a lie to accomplish it, and that those who design ill themselves are ever ready to charge similar designs upon others.—— ¶ *Your bone and your flesh.* Your kinsman, of your tribe and lineage,

3 And his mother's brethren spake of him in the ears of all the men of Shechem all these words: and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech; for they said, He *is* our [d] brother.

4 And they gave him threescore and ten *pieces* of silver out of the house of [e] Baal-berith, wherewith Abimelech hired [f] vain and light persons, which followed him.

5 And he went unto his father's house [g] at Ophrah, and [h] slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, *being* threescore and ten

[d] Gen. 29. 15.

[e] ch. 8. 33. [f] ch. 11. 3. 2 Chron. 13. 7. Prov. 12. 11. Acts 17. 5. [g] ch. 6. 24. [h] 2 Kings 11. 1, 2.

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and therefore so much the more likely to promote your interests. The relation indicated by these words is more or less close according to the connexion in which they occur. In some cases, it implies nothing more than descent from a common ancestor, 1 Chron. 11. 1; in others, kindred of the same blood, as Jacob and Laban, Gen. 29. 14; David and Amasa, 2 Sam. 19. 13; and in others again, it appears simply to indicate the relation subsisting between the inhabitants of the same city or town. Perhaps this is all that is to be understood in the present case. But however interpreted, it was advancing a reason for his election, which was never contemplated in the appointment of magistrates over the nation of Israel. It was, in fact, directly opposed to the true ends of that institution; which required that persons chosen to office should be selected on the ground of moral qualification, and that in their administration of justice, they should be free from the bias naturally arising from private and personal regards.

3. *Their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech.* Heb. ויט לבם אחרי אבימלך *vayyët libbâm a'harë Abimelek, their heart inclined itself after Abimelech;* spoken of as the heart of one man. The reason assigned for their adherence, shows that his suggestions had taken effect. They are prompted to support his claims, because from his near relationship they would doubtless be raised to places of preferment under him, and their city would be likely to be made the metropolis of the kingdom.

4. *Out of the house of Baal-berith.* From this it is evident that idolatry had gained ground again in some places during the life-time of Gideon. The treasure deposited in this temple, which had perhaps been raised from oblations to the idol, and thus consecrated to idolatrous uses, is made through the divine counsels the instrument of bringing upon the idolators deserved punishment, by embroiling them in a civil war that caused their ruin. Nothing is more common, in the providence of God, than for the revenues of sin to be made a plague and a curse to those that amass them.——¶ *Vain and light persons.* Worthless and abandoned men; idlers and vagabonds, the very scum of society, persons who were living on the public, and had nothing to lose; ever the most fitting instruments of tyranny and cruelty.

5. *Slew his brethren—threescore and ten persons.* The real number would seem to have been sixty-eight, for Jotham escaped, and Abimelech him-

persons, upon one stone: notwithstanding, yet Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left; for he hid himself.

6 And all the men of Shechem gathered together, and all the house of Millo, and went and made Abimelech king, by the plain of the pillar that *was* in Shechem.

self is of course to be excepted. This is on the supposition that the whole number of Gideon's sons was, according to ch. 8. 30, precisely seventy, which however cannot be positively affirmed. The presumption is, that seventy is here employed as a round number. We have in this incident the first indication of a savage custom, which is not yet extinct in Asia, and under which, a new king deems it a measure of policy to put to death his brothers, from a fear that their ambition, or the favor of the people towards them, might lead them to form designs against his dignity or life. Thus, the commencement of a new reign is signalized by the same horrible transaction as that of which we here read. In Persia, where the same principle operates, the new monarchs have rather sought to secure their own safety by putting out the eyes of their brothers and others from whom they might entertain apprehensions.——¶ *Upon one stone.* Of the precise manner in which the murder was effected, we are left in ignorance. It was a common mode of capital punishment, in ancient times, to precipitate culprits from an eminence upon a rock or stone; and to this our Saviour seems to allude, Mat. 21. 44. According to some, it was in this manner that the sons of Gideon perished on this occasion. Others suppose that the stone was used as a kind of altar, and that upon it Abimelech, in conjunction with the men of Shechem, made his unfortunate victims an oblation to Baal, in revenge for the sacrifice of the bullock prepared for Baal on the rock, ch. 6. 25, 26. This crime of Gideon, as these idolators considered it, they determined to expiate by the sacrifice of his sons. That the men of Shechem joined in this impious slaughter is indubitable from v. 24, and this is about all that can be distinctly ascertained respecting it. It is highly probable, however, that Abimelech, under some false pretence, as perhaps that of celebrating some festival, had convened his brethren together in one place. The transaction shows, what indeed has been shown in a thousand similar instances, that ruthless ambition never hesitates; that neither conscience nor affection, neither the love of God nor the fear of man, restrains those who are under its baneful influence.

6. *All the house of Milla.* Heb. בית מלוא *beth-millo;* literally, *the house of filling up*, perhaps so called from a deep pit or valley in the neighborhood of Shechem being *filled up*, and a stronghold or castle built upon it. There is a strong presumption that the same place is intended as that which, in v. 46, is called 'a hold of the house of the god Berith.'——¶ *By the plain of the pillar.* Or, Heb. עם אלון מצב *im ēlōn mutztzâb, by the oak of the pillar.* The allusion is perhaps to the oak or oak-grove near which Joshua erected a pillar, as a witness of the covenant renewed between God and Israel, Josh. 24. 26.

7 ¶ And when they told *it* to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of [i]mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you.

8 [k]The trees went forth *on a*

Schmid however maintains that the original מצב never signifies a 'pillar,' or 'statue,' but properly a *mound*, or *artificial heap*, and supposes that the Shechemites raised up some lofty elevation, on the summit of which the ceremony of Abimelech's coronation was performed, in order to render the whole visible to a greater multitude. This structure he supposes, moreover, was situated on a plain near a certain well-known oak, which in memory of the transaction was thenceforward called 'the oak of the rising heap;' just as Deborah's 'palm-tree,' ch. 4. 6, was so called from her having made it a seat of justice. This view of the subject we are inclined to adopt.

7. *Stood in the top of mount Gerizim.* A mountain in the immediate vicinity of Shechem, of which, see Deut. 27. 12. Josephus says, that he availed himself of the occasion of a public festival, when great multitudes of the people were assembled together at the place specified, but still implying that the incident occurred some time after the above-mentioned inauguration of Abimelech as king. But to us it appears more probable that Jotham's address was delivered on the very same occasion with the former event, or at least before the people had dispersed from that convention. The place was the same, and from the language, v. 18, 19, 'ye have risen up *this day*,' we should naturally infer that the time was the same. Jotham's abrupt departure also, after delivering the parable, leads us to the same conclusion. He would of course entertain fears of his personal safety in the midst of a body of excited adherents of his brother, at the very time when their enthusiasm was wrought up to the highest pitch, and after uttering his message would be likely to make good his retreat as speedily as possible. At another time, there would have been less occasion for so much haste.——¶ *Hearken unto me—that God may hearken unto you.* Employing, in this mode of summoning their attention, a kind of adjuration, which would be understood to signify that he spoke on this occasion by divine inspiration, and had a special message from God to deliver to them.

8. *The trees went forth*, &c. Heb. הולך להכו *holĕk hâleku, going went forth;* an emphatic phrase, intimating the entire unanimity and heartiness with which they entered upon the measure. We have in this address of Jotham, the oldest, and one of the most beautiful parables on record. It is the nature of a parable or fable to give 'tongues to trees,' and intelligence, life, and activity to all parts of the animate and inanimate creation. The truth of such a parable lies in the instruction conveyed in it, and the feigned circumstances being known to be such, are no ways inconsistent with veracity, but greatly subserve the cause of truth. The peculiar excellence of this mode of instruction is, that it arrests the at-

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[i] Deut. 11. 29, and 27. 12. Josh. 8. 33. John 4. 20.

[k] See 2 Kings 14. 9.

*time* to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive-tree, [l] Reign thou over us.

9 But the olive-tree said unto them, Should I leave my fat-

[l] ch. 8. 22, 23.

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tention more forcibly, and conveys knowledge more easily, than a train of reasoning could do; and convinces the judgment before prejudice has had time to bar the entrance of truth into the mind. Accordingly it has happened that in the East especially, where the imagination and the whole mental temperament is more fervid and glowing than elsewhere, this veiled form of instruction has always been in high repute, whether in conveying wholesome truths to the ear of power, or inculcating lessons of wisdom and justice and duty upon the obtuse and unreasoning multitude. Mr. Roberts remarks that, 'The people of the East are exceedingly addicted to apologues, and use them to convey instruction or reproof, which with them could scarcely be done so well in any other way. Has a man been told a secret, he says, in repeating it, for instance, "A tree told me this morning, that Kandan offered a large bribe to the Modeliar, to get Muttoo turned out of his situation." Does a man of low caste wish to unite his son in marriage to the daughter of one who is high, the latter will say, "Have you heard that the pumpkin wants to be married to the plantain-tree?" Is a wife sterile, "The cocoa-nut tree in Viraver's garden does not bear any fruit." Has a woman had children by improper intercourse, it is said of her husband's garden, "Ah, the palmirah-trees are now giving cocoa-nuts." Has a man given his daughter in marriage to another who uses her unkindly, he says, "I have planted the sugar-cane by the side of the *margossa* (bitter) tree."' A short fable, together with its 'moral,' is more easily remembered than a labored argument or the same truth expressed in abstract terms, and hence it is that we find this vehicle of instruction so frequently employed in the Scriptures. Fables are there exemplified in all their various uses, whether to reprove kings, to admonish multitudes, or to instruct disciples. Our Lord himself did not disdain to employ them. They are all perfect of their kind; nearly all of them are very short; and in most instances, as in that now before us, the application is made by the speaker. The general moral of Jotham's parable is, (1) That weak and worthless men are ever forward to thrust themselves into power, while the wise and good are more prone to decline it. (2) That they who unduly affect honor, and they who unjustly confer it, will prove sources of misery to each other. Both these points are most strikingly illustrated in the present fable, as compared with the actual results.——¶ *To anoint a king.* From which it appears that the ceremony of *anointing* was in use among the neighboring nations, long before there was any king in Israel; for the scope of the parable makes it necessary to suppose that this was done in imitation of foreign tribes. As the Lord was their king, there was no more occasion for the Israelites setting a king over them, than there was for the trees to appoint a protecting head over *them*

9. *The olive tree said*, &c. As the

ness, [m] wherewith by me they honor God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?

10 And the trees said to the fig-tree, Come thou, *and* reign over us.

11 But the fig-tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit,

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[m] Ps. 104. 15.

bramble was the meanest and most worthless of all the trees of the field, or forest, so the olive was the most useful. This tree, naturalists observe, seems to have been originally a native of Asia, whence it was transplanted into Egypt and Barbary and the South of Europe. The wood is hard-grained and heavy, and not liable to be injured by insects. Its color is yellowish, veined, and of an agreeable odor, while its texture renders it susceptible of a fine polish. The appearance of the olive-tree is not unlike that of our willows, as the leaves are lance-shaped, or narrow, and hoary. The fruit when ripe is like a damson to the eye, with a soft oleaginous pulp, and a hard nut in the centre. In some parts of France the inhabitants eat the berries of the olive with their bread, and find them an agreeable and wholesome condiment. The olive, in general, requires a little preparation in brine or hot water to dissipate the bitter principle which it contains, though a variety, which is very uncommon in France, is so sweet that it may be eaten at once. It is probable that the olives of Judea, when in its prosperity, were of this character, and formed to the inhabitants a pleasant accompaniment to the more substantial articles of their daily food. The oil of the olive is pre-eminent among vegetable oils, and has not only always had an extensive use in culinary purposes, but formed the menstruum or vehicle of the most celebrated perfumes.——¶ *Should I leave my fatness.* The form of the original is peculiar, being apparently so compounded as to convey at once both an active and passive sense;—'Shall be persuaded to make to cease, (i. e. to forego) my fatness?'—covertly implying that the assumption of rank and authority involves a relinquishment of one's private ease, advantage, and comfort. ——¶ *Wherewith by me they honor God and man.* There was a large use of olive-oil in the service of God. The priests were anointed with it, the lamps in the tabernacle lighted with it, and almost all the offerings of fine flour cakes prepared in the pan, &c., had oil mingled with them; for which reason Jotham might say that 'with it they honor God.' Moreover as priests, prophets, and kings, were anointed with it, and their office was the most honorable, he might with propriety say, 'therewith they honor man.'——¶ *Go to be promoted over the trees.* Marg. 'to go up and down for *other* trees.' Horsely, 'to wave or nod over the trees.' Our rendering, 'promoted,' comes far short of giving the exact force of the Hebrew. The original word properly signifies *to be moved to and fro, to wander, to stagger, to be shaken and tossed.* This interpretation gives a more lively image of the perils, cares, and vicissitudes of government, especially among a turbulent and refractory people.

11. *Should I forsake my sweetness.* The fruit of the fig-tree is the sweet-

and go to be promoted over the trees?

12 Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, *and* reign over us.

13 And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, [n]which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?

14 Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, *and* reign over us.

15 And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, *then* come

[n] Ps. 104. 15.

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est or most luscious of all fruits. A full ripe fig, in its own climate, has an indescribable sweetness; so much so, that it is almost impossible to eat them, till a considerable time after they are gathered from the trees, and have gone through an artificial preparation.

13. *Which cheereth God and man.* Not that God and man are cheered by the use of wine *in the same way;* but as it was employed in the sacrifices and offerings made to God, it might in that sense be said that he was 'cheered' by it, because when thus offered he was graciously pleased to accept of it.

14. *Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us.* The meanest and most worthless of trees, and fit only to be burned, though capable of annoyance from being armed with prickly spikes. The original אטד *atad,* translated thorns' in Ps. 58. 9, and rendered *rhamnus,* in the Vulgate, is supposed to have been a species of buckthorn, a native of Syria and Palestine, whence it migrated into Europe in the reign of Augustus Cæsar. Many of the buckthorn family are remarkable for the length and abundance of their spines, and for the very combustible nature of their wood, which probably suggested the idea of the 'fire' that was to come forth and consume the disaffected. It is a proper emblem of a base-born, impious, cruel, and oppressive king.

15. *If in truth ye anoint me,* &c. That the bramble here represents Abimelech, chosen and anointed king by the Shechemites, is the general opinion of commentators, both Christian and Jewish; and thus far, undoubtedly, the opinion is correct. But when it is supposed, that the words spoken by the bramble represent similar words *actually* spoken by Abimelech, it may be questioned whether they have hit the true scope of the passage. The real import of the bramble's reply seems to be, not to represent what Abimelech *actually* said, but *what he justly might have said,* in a spirit of prophecy, to the men of Shechem, intent upon his elevation to the throne. The bramble, in answer to the proposal, does not decline, but accepts, the offered honor; but yet in the very terms of the acceptance, moved by a prophetic impulse, utters a prediction respecting the event, implying that so far as this measure was not adopted in truth, i. e. rightly, properly, acceptably, it would be attended with disastrous consequences, and the bramble, as an unjust usurper over the rest of the trees, would be consumed by a fire that should spread and involve in its ravages the lofty cedars of Le-

*and* put your trust in my [o]shadow: and if not, [p]let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the [q]cedars of Lebanon.

16 Now therefore, if ye have done truly and sincerely, in that ye have made Abimelech king, and if ye have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done unto him [r]according to the deserving of his hands:

17 (For my father fought for you, and adventured his life far, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian:

18 [s]And ye are risen up against my father's house this day, and have slain his sons, threescore and ten persons, upon one stone, and have made Abimelech, the son of his maid-servant. king

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[o] Isa. 30. 2. Dan. 4. 12. Hos. 14. 7. [p] ver. 20. Num. 21. 28. Ezek. 19. 14. [q] 2 Kings 14. 9. Ps. 104. 16. Isa. 2. 13, and 37. 24. Ezek. 31. 3.

[r] ch. 8. 35. [s] ver. 5, 6.

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banon. This was precisely what Abimelech *should* have said to the men of Shechem, although, in point of fact, he seems to have been so confident of success, and a favorable result, that nothing was farther from his thoughts. The whole drift of the passage turns upon the true meaning of the phrase 'in truth,' which is not here opposed to falsehood, duplicity, fraud, and mockery, but to conduct, which is wrong, improper, not founded in views of duty and obedience. Consequently the words that follow, 'let fire come out,' &c , ought rather to be rendered, 'fire shall come out,' &c., as they are merely a prediction of the result that would ensue, provided their motives had not been right in what they had done. Jotham's application in the ensuing verses clearly confirms this interpretation.——¶ *Let fire come out of the bramble*, &c. Understood as a prophecy, the meaning is, that the man represented by the bramble will be a source of plagues and judgments to the 'cedars of Lebanon,' i. e. to the most eminent persons of the land, particularly of Shechem; a prediction which the sequel shows to have been remarkably fulfilled.

16. *If ye have done truly and sincerely.* Properly rendered by the Vulgate, 'If ye have acted well and without sin in appointing,' &c. The phrase is exegetical of 'in truth' in the preceding verse. The same expression occurs Josh. 24. 14.

17. *Adventured his life far.* Heb. ישלך את נפשו מנגד *yishlëk eth naphsho minneged, cast his life from over against.* A metaphorical expression, highly significant, and requiring us to conceive that Gideon, while occupying a place of safety, with his life unjeoparded, heroically resolves *to throw it*, as one would cast a spear, directly towards the enemy, into the very midst of peril. This he did when he fell with only three hundred men upon the multitudinous hosts of the Midianites. Comp. ch. 5. 18, and 12. 3.

18. *Have slain his sons.* The murderous deed perpetrated by Abimelech is here charged upon the men of Shechem, on the ground of their having consented to it, approved of it, and probably assisted in it. Participators in crime justly share the guilt of the principals.——¶ *Son of his maid-servant.* His concubine; so called here by way of disparage-

over the men of Shechem, because he *is* your brother :)

19 If ye then have dealt truly and sincerely with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, *then* [t]rejoice ye in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you:

20 But if not [u]let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech.

21 And Jotham ran away, and fled, and went to [x]Beer, and dwelt there, for fear of Abimelech his brother.

[t] Isai. 8. 6. Phil. 3. 3. [u] ver. 15, 56, 57.

[x] 2 Sam. 20. 14.

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ment and reproach. Maid-servants, however, were often adopted as concubines, Ex. 21. 7-10.——¶ *Because he is your brother.* Not because he is the son of Gideon, or for any intrinsic worth in himself, but simply from his bearing a relation to you, which you hope to turn to your advantage.

19. *If ye have dealt truly and sincerely—then rejoice ye,* &c. He therefore leaves it to the event, that is, to the providence of God, to determine whether they had done well or ill in their choice; q. d. 'if your conduct towards the house of Gideon can be justified at any bar of justice, honor, or conscience, then much good may you have of your king; but if you have dealt basely and wickedly in this matter, then never expect to prosper.'

20. *Let fire come out,* &c. Or, Heb. תצא אש *tëtzë ësh, fire shall come out.* Not barely a prediction, but also an imprecation or curse, as it is expressly called, v. 57. As the thorn or bramble may be the means of kindling other wood, because it may be easily ignited; so shall Abimelech be the cause of kindling a fire of civil discord among you, that shall consume the rulers and great men of your country. The denunciations of prophets and good men, uttered under divine prompting, were often clothed with an *efficiency* which laid a foundation for the character given of them in what is said of the two witnesses, Rev. 11. 5, 6, 'And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy; and have power—to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.'

21. *Ran away and fled and went.* This accumulation of equivalent expressions denotes the great haste with which Jotham made his escape; confirming the view given above, v. 7, of the *time* when this address was delivered.——¶ *To Beer.* Beer signifies a *well,* and is prefixed to the names of many places mentioned in Scripture, from water being found in their vicinity. The place here designated seems to have been a city of the Gibeonites, Josh. 9. 17, within the boundary of the tribe of Benjamin. It was situated about ten miles north of Jerusalem, and not far from Gibeah. Eusebius takes notice of this place as being a considerable village in his time; and Maundrell informs us that the modern village stands in a pleasant situation on an edge of the hill, with a gentle declivity to the south. At the foot of the hill there is an excellent spring

22 ¶ When Abimelech had reigned three years over Israel,

23 Then [y]God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem [z]dealt treacherously with Abimelech:

24 [a]That the cruelty *done* to the threescore and ten sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood be laid upon Abimelech their brother which slew them, and upon the men of Shechem which aided him in the killing of his brethren.

[y] 1 Sam. 16. 14, and 18. 9, 10. See 1 Kings 12. 15, and 22. 22. 2 Chron. 10. 15, and 18. 19, &c. Isa. 19. 2, 14. [z] Isai. 33. 1.

[a] 1 Kings 2. 32. Esth. 9. 25. Ps. 7. 16. Mat. 23. 35, 36.

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of water, which may have given it its name, and above it are the remains of an old church built by the empress Helena.

22. *When Abimelech had reigned three years over Israel.* Here again the original for 'reigned' (שרה *sârâh*), is a word properly signifying *to exercise despotic sway*, a species of rule entirely different from the mild and gentle ascendency indicated by the term שפט *shâphat, to judge.* The legitimate rulers of Israel at this time could never be termed שרים *sarim*, *princes*, unless in consequence of the *usurpation* of a power which the primitive structure of their government did not allow. It is probable that Abimelech's authority did not at first extend beyond the city of Shechem, which had appointed him king. But by gradual encroachments he seems to have extended his sway over some of the adjacent towns and territories, compelling them to acknowledge his power, as we find him, v. 50, going against Thebez, in the tribe of Ephraim, as a rebellious city that seems to have refused subjection to him. By the phrase 'reigned over Israel,' we are doubtless to understand *a part of Israel*, i. e. such tribes as submitted to him.

23. *God sent an evil spirit.* That is, permitted the evil spirit of discord and treachery to break out. Under the direction of providence, but not in consequence of any positive agency, jealousies were suffered to arise, which produced factions, and these factions in their turn produced insurrections, civil contentions, and bloodshed. Comp. 1 Kings 22. 23; Ps. 78. 49. The throne of violence never stands secure. The blood upon which it has been established seldom fails to undermine it at last.——¶ *Dealt treacherously.* The original properly implies *faithlessness*, or *the being wanting to one's engagements*, and is especially applied, Jer. 3. 20, to conjugal infidelity. The Shechemites brake their covenant with Abimelech and shook off his yoke, but how far they were chargeable in this with a moral delinquency in the sight of God, we pretend not to say. The word, perhaps, in this connexion, does not carry any such implication with it.

24. *That the cruelty,* &c. That is, the just revenge of that cruelty; indicating the end, the scope, of the sovereign permission mentioned in the preceding verse. Sooner or later the justice of God will make inquisition for blood, especially the blood of the innocent.——¶ *Which aided him.* Heb. הזקו את ידיו *hizzeku eth yâdâv, which strengthened his hands.*

25 And the men of Shechem set liers in wait for him in the top of the mountains, and they robbed all that came along that way by them: and it was told Abimelech.

26 And Gaal the son of Ebed came with his brethren, and went over to Shechem: and the men of Shechem put their confidence in him.

27 And they went out into the fields, and gathered their vineyards, and trode *the grapes*, and

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25. *Set liers in wait.* The writer now goes on to state *in what manner* the evil spirit of dissension before spoken of began to produce its legitimate effects. The disaffection which had been some time growing in secret, at length taking advantage of Abimelech's temporary absence from Shechem, assumed the character of open revolt, and a conspiracy was formed to make a prisoner of him whom they had lately hailed as prince. God is often pleased to punish bad men by the very persons who have contributed to their elevation, thus chastising them with the rods which they themselves have gathered.——¶ *Robbed all that came along that way.* Disappointed and impatient probably by reason of Abimelech's delay in returning, those who were posted in ambush were prompted to enact upon others the violence intended for him, and more especially, we may suppose, upon such of his known adherents as chanced to pass that way.

26. *And Gaal the son of Ebed came*, &c. The mention of this person is somewhat abruptly introduced, and we know no more of him than is here stated. It has been conjectured that he was a native Canaanite from his courting the Shechemites into subjection to the men of Hamor, who was anciently, in the days of Jacob, lord of this city. However this may be, there is little doubt that he was a man of rank and influence, who had once been a citizen of Shechem, but for reasons unknown, had ceased for a time to be a resident there. Being, however, of a bold, aspiring, ambitious character, and finding the troubled state of the city propitious to his designs, he returns, accompanied with a strong party of relatives, and begins plotting at once to put himself at the head of affairs.——¶ *Went over to Shechem.* Or, Heb. 'passed by into Shechem.' That is, probably, passed by the liers in wait. Knowing them to be a party hostile to Abimelech and favorable to their own views, they suffered them to pass without molestation. It is not unlikely that Gaal had been previously in correspondence with the disaffected part of the Shechemites, and was fully advised of the state of things in the city.——¶ *Put their confidence in him.* So as to make him head of the faction which had been organizing against Abimelech, but which hitherto had lacked a suitable leader. Vulg. 'At whose coming the inhabitants of Shechem took courage.'

27. *And they went out*, &c. Or, Heb. 'and when they had gone out, &c.—then they made merry.' The original for 'making merry,' is properly, 'making songs,' or, 'making praises,' and refers to the custom of celebrating the harvest of vintage with songs of rejoicing and other fes-

made merry, and went into [b] the house of their god, and did eat and drink, and cursed Abimelech.

28 And Gaal the son of Ebed said, [c] Who *is* Abimelech, and who *is* Shechem, that we should serve him? *is* not *he* the son of Jerubbaal? and Zebul his officer? serve the men of [d] Hamor the father of Shechem: for why should we serve him?

29 And [e] would to God this people were under my hand!

[b] ver. 4. [c] 1 Sam. 25. 10. 1 Kings 12. 16. [d] Gen. 34. 2, 6. [e] 2 Sam. 15. 4.

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tivities; of which see Lev. 19. 24; Is. 16. 9, 10; Jer. 25. 30.——¶ *Went into the house of their god*, &c. In imitation of the worshippers of the true God, who resorted to the sanctuary on such occasions.——¶ *Cursed Abimelech.* Loading his name with the foulest reproaches and revilings, and perhaps calling upon their god to ratify their imprecations. The excitement occasioned by wine in scenes of mirth and banqueting naturally prepares men for murders, treason, and every evil work.

28. *Who is Abimelech, and who is Shechem?* That is, the Shechemites. Compare them together, put this base-born, worthless usurper by the side of us native Shechemites, and what reason can be assigned for our subjection to him.——¶ *Is he not the son of Jerubbaal?* Spoken by way of disparagement and contempt, as if despising his memory and prompted by an indignant recollection of the act on which his name was founded, viz. his throwing down the altar of Baal. Thus do men of turbulent and ambitious spirits 'despise dominions, and speak evil of dignities,' and thus are the most valuable services of the best of men requited by the vile and worthless.——¶ *And Zebul his officer?* Heb. פקידו *pekido, his overseer;* probably made governor of Shechem by Abimelech in his absence. Are you so mean-spirited and cowardly that you not only submit to the tyrant himself, but suffer his very servants to lord it over you, and particularly this contemptible Zebul?——¶ *Serve the men of Hamor.* The descendants of Hamor. If ye will be in subjection, call some one to authority who is descended from the ancient and legitimate stock of Shechem, instead of this ignoble alien despot. This was perhaps a virtual challenge to them to fix their choice upon himself, as deriving his origin from this source. This is confirmed by what follows.——¶ *The father of Shechem.* The father or founder of the city and the race of the Shechemites; the name of an individual standing for the whole people.

29. *Would to God this people were under my hand!* An exclamation disclosing the hidden source which usually prompts the complaints of artful demagogues against the existing order of things, and their large professions of concern for the public welfare; though seldom so frankly declared as in the present instance. His words clearly evince that his real object was not so much to recover the liberties of his countrymen, as to persuade them to a change of rulers. It is not easy to set bounds to the mischief that may be effected by an artful leader working upon the minds of an inflamed populace.——¶ *Then would I remove Abimelech.* Would

then would I remove Abimelech. And he said to Abimelech, Increase thine army, and come out.

30 ¶ And when Zebul the ruler of the city heard the words of Gaal the son of Ebed, his anger was kindled.

31 And he sent messengers unto Abimelech privily, saying, Behold, Gaal the son of Ebed, and his brethren, be come to Shechem; and behold, they fortify the city against thee.

32 Now therefore up by night, thou, and the people that *is* with thee, and lie in wait in the field:

33 And it shall be, *that* in the morning, as soon as the sun is up, thou shalt rise early, and set

speedily remove, dispatch, or make way with; an emphatic expression, implying more in Hebrew than in English.——¶ *He said to Abimelech, Increase thine army*, &c. As we have no evidence that Abimelech was within hearing of these words, the probability is, that being heated with wine and puffed up with arrogance, Gaal addresses and defies him, in this bravado style, as though actually present. Yet it may be that he sent word by some of Abimelech's friends to their master, that he was willing to dispute the point with him, allowing him at the same time every advantage on the score of numbers which he could desire. Let him gather all his allies, and do his worst, still he would find the son of Ebed more than a match for him.

30. *His anger was kindled.* However he might have felt for his master's honor, it was scarcely to be expected that he should pass by the insult cast upon himself. It would seem, v. 36, that from motives of policy he had hitherto temporized with the disaffected party at Shechem, but he now becomes decided, though he is still restrained from open measures against the insurgents.

31. *Sent messengers--privily.* Heb. בתרמה *betârmâh*, *craftily*, *in fraud.* That is, the *pretended* object of his sending them did not correspond with his *real* object. His 'givings out' were far removed from his 'true-meant designs.' If he had discovered himself to be wholly for Abimelech, the men of the city might at once have risen against him and put him to death. He therefore goes warily to work to acquaint Abimelech with the enemy's designs, and to put him in a way to revenge the insults cast upon them both.——¶ *They fortify the city against thee.* Heb. צרים *tzarim*, *are besieging*, from the root צור *tzūr*, *to besiege*, *to press with siege*, usually spoken of hostile operations carried on by invaders *from without*, and not without great violence applied to *defensive* measures adopted by those *within* a city. For this reason the expression, we suppose, is to be taken metaphorically for the influence exerted by Gaal and his party *upon the minds of the citizens*, in stirring up, exciting, augmenting the sedition that was spreading through the city. They were engaged in *pressing*, *urging*, *instigating* the citizens against Abimelech, and therefore it was important for him to make haste in advancing upon Shechem.

33. *Set upon the city.* We doubt if this rendering gives the true force of the original, or the real policy of

upon the city: and behold, *when* he and the people that *is* with him come out against thee, then mayest thou do to them as thou shalt find occasion.

34 ¶ And Abimelech rose up, and all the people that *were* with him, by night, and they laid wait against Shechem in four companies.

35 And Gaal the son of Ebed went out, and stood in the entering of the gate of the city: and Abimelech rose up, and the people that *were* with him, from lying in wait.

36 And when Gaal saw the people, he said to Zebul, Behold, there come people down from the top of the mountains. And Zebul said unto him, Thou seest the shadow of the mountains as *if they were* men.

37 And Gaal spake again, and said, See, there come people down by the middle of the land, and another company come along by the plain of Meonenim.

Abimelech. He does not seem to have designed, at least at present, to attack the city while Gaal was in it. He even abstained from this after he had overcome him in the open field, and when nothing that we can see prevented his pushing his conquest into the heart of Shechem, v. 40. But the true import of the word is to *spread one's self, to expand*, and the phrase may be rendered, 'spread thyself (thy forces) against or towards the city,' i. e. with a view to lure out Gaal to an engagement in the open field.——¶*As thou shalt find occasion.* Heb. 'as thine hand shall find;' an Hebraism, properly rendered in our translation. Comp. 1 Sam. 10. 7, where the same phrase occurs.

34. *Abimelech rose up.* Addressed himself to the matter before him, entered upon the business in hand. See on Josh. 1. 2.

34. *Laid wait.* Probably in some of the mountains in the immediate vicinity, as is to be inferred from v. 36.——¶ *In four companies.* Heb. ארבעה ראשים *arbâäh râshim, in four heads;* a term applied to the *general divisions* of anything.

35. *Gaal went out—and stood at the entering of the gate.* Probably not alone, but at the head of his forces, either to lead them forth upon some short excursion about the city, or to be prepared for whatever assault might be meditated against him. 'Had he been as valiant as he was vigilant, it might have gone better with him and his partisans.' *Trapp.*

36. *He said to Zebul, Behold, &c.* The familiarity existing between these two individuals, under their present circumstances, shows very clearly that Zebul had hitherto dissembled his real sentiments and purposes. It is not possible otherwise to account for such an interview at this time between parties so related.

37. *By the middle of the land.* Heb. מעם טבור הארץ *mëim tabbur hâ-âretz, from the navel of the land.* That is, as Gesenius and other lexicographers explain it, from the *height, the most elevated summit*, of the land.——¶*By the plain of Meonenim.* Or, Heb. מדרך אלון מעוננים *midderek ëlōn meonedim, by the way of the oak of the augurers, or regarders of times;* probably a tree or cluster of trees where superstitious auguries were

38 Then said Zebul unto him, Where *is* now thy mouth, wherewith thou [f] saidst, Who *is* Abimelech, that we should serve him? *is* not this the people that thou hast despised? go out, I pray now, and fight with them.

39 And Gaal went out before the men of Shechem, and fought with Abimelech.

40 And Abimelech chased him, and he fled before him, and many were overthrown, *and* wounded, *even* unto the entering of the gate.

41 And Abimelech dwelt at Arumah: and Zebul thrust out Gaal and his brethren, that they should not dwell in Shechem.

42 And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people went out into the field; and they told Abimelech.

[f] ver. 28, 29.

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performed, or where certain soothsayers dwelt.

38. *Where is now thy mouth*, &c. Where is now thy boasting, thy vain bravado, of which thou wert lately so profuse? Does thy courage begin to quail upon the bare sight of the enemy? In proportion as Abimelech approached, Zebul begins to speak with more effrontery, and throw off his disguise, though his words still had the air of merely exciting Gaal to go forth like a man and redeem the pledge he had before given. Gaal thus had proof that those who are rebels themselves must not expect fidelity in their associates.

39. *And Gaal went out*, &c. The only becoming answer to such cutting taunts and sarcasms was to sally boldly forth against the enemy. But the special hand of God was in the event for his punishment. 'Where iniquity breakfasts, calamity will be sure to dine.' *Trapp.*

41. *Abimelech dwelt in Arumah.* Heb. ישב בארומה *yëshëb bârumâh*, *sat down in Arumah.* He retired hither for the present with his army, still cherishing the design of gaining farther advantages.——¶ *Zebul thrust out Gaal and his brethren.* These words, it would seem, are not to be taken as indicating a violent expulsion. For if Zebul and his party had obtained a complete ascendency in the city, why did they not at once deliver up Gaal and his faction to Abimelech, and receive him within the walls? The fact undoubtedly was, that notwithstanding the recent defeat, the crafty Zebul saw that Abimelech's interest in the city was not strong enough to justify him in completely throwing off the mask, and he accordingly went to work, like a skilful master of intrigue, to undermine Gaal in the affections of the people, by hypocritically grieving over the recent disaster, and persuading them that it was owing to the cowardice and bad management of their leader. This is the account Josephus gives of the matter, and we think the correct one. The consequence was, that Gaal made an ignominious exit from the city, and we hear no more of him.

42. *The people went out into the field.* To follow their usual employments. As Abimelech had withdrawn his forces, they issued forth, not dreaming but they were entirely secure. But the wrath of a king does not so easily subside.——¶ *They*

43 And he took the people, and divided them into three companies, and laid wait in the field, and looked, and behold, the people *were* come forth out of the city; and he rose up against them, aud smote them.

44 And Abimelech, and the company that *was* with him, rushed forward, and stood in the entering of the gate of the city: and the two *other* companies ran upon all *the people* that *were* in the fields, and slew them.

45 And Abimelech fought against the city all that day; and [g] he took the city, and slew the people that *was* therein, and [h] beat down the city, and sowed it with salt.

46 ¶ And when all the men of the tower of Shechem heard

[g] ver. 20. [h] Deut. 29. 23. 1 Kings 12. 25 2 Kings 3. 25.

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*told Abimelech.* A Hebrew idiom, for 'it was told to Abimelech.'

43. *And he took the people*, &c. We prefer to render this in the pluperfect, 'for he had taken,' &c., as it seems far less likely that he should set an ambush, while the people were already in the field, and could easily discover all his movements. Moreover, the last clause of the verse as read in the original, 'behold, the people coming forth,' plainly shows that their egress from the city took place *after* the ambush was laid.

44. *And Abimelech and the company that was with him*, &c. This verse details in a more particular manner the circumstance of the 'smiting,' mentioned above, and at the same time anticipates the question, why the people attacked did not at once betake themselves to the city. Because, says the narrative, Abimelech with a strong detachment interposed himself, and cut off the communication between them and the city, that they might neither make their retreat within the walls, nor receive any succors from thence. 'When we go out about our business, we are not sure that we shall come home again; there are deaths both in the city and in the field.' *Henry.*

45. *Took the city*, &c. Though the city of his nativity, yet he fell upon in with merciless barbarity, laid it in ruins, by beating down its walls and buildings, and slew all the inhabitants! His sowing it with salt, was in token that he designed it to become a perpetual desolation. The salt was not intended to render it *barren*, for a town or city is not designed for culture, but for building; but as salt is an emblem of *incorruption* and *perpetuity*, it was employed to *perpetuate* the memory of this transaction. By comparing Deut. 29. 33, it would appear that there was an allusion in the act to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Yet all his efforts did not avail to make its desolation permanent, for it was afterwards rebuilt, and became so considerable a place that all Israel resorted thither to make Rehoboam king, 1 Kings 12. 1.

46. *The men of the tower of Shechem.* Heb. בעלי מגדל *baalë migdol, the lords or masters of the tower.* How these persons were distinguished from the other inhabitants of Shechem, or how this tower stood related to the city, it is extremely difficult to determine. It is not unlikely that it was a castle belonging to the city

*that*, they entered into an hold of the house [i] of the god Berith.

47 And it was told Abimelech, that all the men of the tower of Shechem were gathered together.

48 And Abimelech gat him up to mount [k] Zalmon, he and all the people that *were* with him; and Abimelech took an axe in his hand, and cut down a bough from the trees, and took it, and laid *it* on his shoulder, and said unto the people that *were* with him, What ye have seen me do, make haste, *and* do as I *have done.*

49 And all the people likewise cut down every man his bough, and followed Abimelech, and put *them* to the hold, and set the hold on fire upon them: so that all the men of the tower of Shechem died also, about a thousand men and women.

50 ¶ Then went Abimelech to Thebez, and encamped against Thebez, and took it.

51 But there was a strong tower within the city, and thither fled all the men and women, and all they of the city, and shut *it* to them, and gat them up to the top of the tower.

52 And Abimelech came unto the tower, and fought against it,

[i] ch. 8. 33. [k] Ps. 68. 14.

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and situated in its vicinity, to which a considerable portion of the population had previously betaken themselves to escape the fury of their invader. Whatever it were, it was now deemed too insecure an asylum to trust to, and its occupants withdrew to a strong-hold in the precincts of the temple, where they promised themselves safety if not from its strength, at least from its sacredness. But in putting themselves under the protection of their idol, that which they hoped would have been for their welfare, proved to them a snare and a trap. It is highly probable that this was no other than the place called, v. 6, 'the house of Millo,' which was to be involved in the catastrophe predicted in Jotham's curse, v. 20, an event most strikingly accomplished when the place was set on fire by Abimelech.

48. *Mount Zalmon.* A mountain in the vicinity of Shechem, so called from the abundant *shade* caused by the forests with which it was covered. See Ps. 68. 15.

50. *Encamped against Thebez.* A city of Ephraim in the neighborhood of Shechem, and about thirteen miles west from Bethshan (Scythopolis). According to Eusebius and Jerome, it continued till their time, or to about four hundred years after Christ, but at the present day it has wholly disappeared.

51. *A strong tower within the city.* Doubtless a sort of citadel such as exists in most considerable towns in western Asia, and which serves the people as a last retreat when the town is taken by an enemy, and where the people shut themselves up on occasions of popular tumult. In some parts of the East, such towers are to be seen in the open country, where the neighboring peasantry may deposit their more valuable property, or themselves take refuge, when the approach of an enemy or of a plundering tribe is expected.

and went hard unto the door of the tower to burn it with fire.

53 And a certain woman [l]cast a piece of a millstone upon Abimelech's head, and all to break his skull.

54 Then [m]he called hastily unto the young man his armor-bearer, and said unto him, Draw thy sword, and slay me, that men say not of me, A woman slew him. And his young man thrust him through, and he died.

55 And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they departed every man unto his place.

56 ¶ [n]Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech, which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren:

[l] 2 Sam. 11. 21. [m] So 1 Sam. 31. 4.

[n] ver. 24. Job 31. 3. Ps. 94. 23. Prov. 5. 22.

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53. *A piece of a millstone.* Literally, '*a piece of a chariot*-wheel,' but elsewhere applied to *upper-millstones.*——¶*And all to break his skull.* In nearly all the copies of the English Bible printed in England, the verb appears in the past tense, 'brake,' whereas in all or nearly all the American editions the word is 'break,' as in the text above. The former reading is certainly the correct one. The error in our editions has arisen from a misapprehension of the true meaning of the phrase 'all to.' According to the present use of language, this would seem rather to express *intention* than the *result* of action, but it really expresses the latter. 'All to,' in many of the old English writers, means 'altogether,' 'entirely,' or as Johnson says, is used, 'as a particle of mere enforcement;' and so doubtless it is used here; q. d. 'she entirely or utterly brake his skull.' Thus in Holland's Translation of Pliny, (A. D. 1601,) 'As for him that hath let flie a dart at him, (the lion,) and yet missed his marke and done no hurt, if hee chance to catch him, he *all to* shaketh, tosseth, and turneth him, lying along at his feet, but doth him no harme at all besides.' Not understanding this, many copies of the common version, have changed it to indicate *intention*, by substituting 'break,' for 'brake.'

54. *And he died.* Abimelech's device to avoid the disgrace of perishing by the hands of a woman, availed him little, for nearly three centuries afterwards we find his death ascribed to the woman who threw the piece of millstone from the wall, 2 Sam. 11. 21. 'There now lies the greatness of Abimelech; on one stone he had slain his seventy brethren and now a stone slays him; his head had stolen the crown of Israel, and now his head is smitten. O the just succession of the revenges of God! Gideon's ephod is punished with the blood of his sons; the blood of his sons is shed by the procurement of the Shechemites; the blood of the Shechemites is shed by Abimelech; the blood of Abimelech is spilt by a woman. The retaliations of God are sure and just, and make a more due pedigree than descent of nature.' *Bp. Hall.*

56. *Rendered the wickedness.* Requited, recompensed the wickedness. Both the fratricide Abimelech and the unprincipled men of Shechem. had the iniquity visited upon them of which they had been guilty. Man's

57 And all the evil of the men of Shechem did God render upon their heads: and upon them came [o]the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal.

## CHAPTER X.

AND after Abimelech there [a]arose to defend Israel, Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in mount Ephraim.

2 And he judged Israel twenty and three years, and died, and was buried in Shamir.

3 ¶ And after him arose Jair, a Gileadite, and judged Israel twenty and two years.

4 And he had thirty sons that [b]rode on thirty ass colts, and they had thirty cities, [c]which

[o] ver. 20. [a] ch. 2. 16.

[b] ch. 5. 10, and 12. 14. [c] Deut. 3. 14.

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judgment may be avoided, but there is no escaping from the judgment of God. The recorded end of Abimelech suggests the remark, (1) That they who thirst for blood, God will at last give them their own blood to drink. (2) The weak in God's hand can confound the mighty, and those who walk in pride, he is able to abase. (3) They who in life consulted only their pride and ambition, will usually die as they live, more solicitous that their honor should be preserved on earth, than that their souls be saved from hell. (4) The methods proud men take to secure a great name, often only serve to perpetuate their infamy.

## CHAPTER X.

1. *Arose to defend.* Heb. יקם להושיע *yâkom lehōshia, arose to save or deliver.* To sustain the office and act the part of a savior or deliverer, in case it should be necessary. They were now freed from the tyranny of Abimelech, and as far as appears enjoyed prevailing peace, yet they were still liable to annoyance and incursions from the neighboring powers, and it was fitting that they should have a head to preside over their concerns, repressing internal discords, maintaining union, guarding against idolatry, and prepared at all times to take the field in their defence.——¶ *Dwelt in Shamir, in mount Ephraim.* Though of the tribe of Issachar, yet when raised to the government, he came and dwelt in mount Ephraim, as being a more central station, one to which the people might more conveniently resort for judgment.

4. *Thirty sons that rode on thirty ass colts,* &c. A very remarkable indication of eastern manners, and of the state of the times. It seems that the people so generally went about on foot, that to ride on an ass, that is, to ride at all, was considered a mark of wealth and distinction. So we afterwards read of Abdon, another judge, ch. 12. 14, that 'he had forty sons and thirty nephews, that rode on threescore and ten ass colts.' No doubt this conveyed to the ancient Hebrews the idea of as much consideration as it does among us to say, that a person keeps a carriage. Josephus, perhaps from thinking the indication undignified, changes the asses to horses.——¶ *Thirty cities—called Havoth-jair unto this day.* Heb. 'villages of Jair.' We read in Num. 32 41, that 'Jair the son of Manasseh went and took the small

are called Havoth-jair unto this day, which *are* in the land of Gilead.

5 And Jair died, and was buried in Camon.

6 ¶ And [d] the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD, and [e] served Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and [f] the gods of Syria, and the gods of [g] Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the LORD, and served not him.

7 And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he [h] sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon.

8 And that year they vexed and oppressed the children of Israel eighteen years, all the children of Israel that *were* on the other side Jordan in the land of the Amorites, which *is* in Gilead.

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[d] ch. 2. 11, and 3. 7, and 4. 1, and 6. 1, and 13. 1. [e] ch. 2. 13. [f] ch. 2. 12. [g] 1 Kings 11. 33. Ps. 106. 36.

[h] ch. 2. 14. 1 Sam. 12. 9.

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towns thereof, and called them Havoth-jair,' from which some have supposed that the Jair there mentioned is the same person with the judge spoken of in the passage before us. But the former was doubtless the ancestor of the latter, though the names of the villages in question were retained unaltered from the original possessor. Their number, as we learn from 1 Chron. 2. 22, was at first only twenty-three, but the remaining seven were added in process of time. The circumstance affords evidence of the rank and opulence of the family.

6. *Did evil again.* Heb. יסיפו לעשות הרע *yosiphu laasoth hâra*, *added to do evil.* The defection here mentioned was undoubtedly very gross and of aggravated enormity. They became in a sense universal idolators, adopting *all* the gods of the surrounding nations. They scarcely seemed to have admitted the God of Israel as one of the many deities they worshipped, but to have cast him off altogether. 'Those that think to serve both God and mammon, will soon come entirely to forsake God, and to serve mammon only. If God have not all the heart he will soon have none of it.' *Henry.*

7. *And he sold them.* See on ch. 2. 14.——¶*Into the hands of the Philistines and—of Ammon.* The one on the west, the other on the east; so that they were grievously annoyed on both sides.

8. *That year they vexed and oppressed the children of Israel eighteen years.* We know not what sense to make of this clause as it now stands, which seems to bring an oppression of eighteen years' continuance within the space of one year. Probably the solution is to render the verbs in the pluperfect, 'and that year they *had* vexed and oppressed them eighteen years;' i. e. that year completed the period of eighteen years, during which they had proved a scourge to them. The oppression commenced during the administration of Jair, perhaps nearly at the same time with the apostasy which caused it, and at the time of his death, had continued eighteen years. This last

9 Moreover, the children of Ammon passed over Jordan, to fight also against Judah, and against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim: so that Israel was sore distressed.

10 ¶ [i] And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, saying, We have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim.

11 And the LORD said unto the children of Israel, *Did* not *I* de-

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[i] 1 Sam. 12. 10.

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event, though occurring after the apostasy commenced, is mentioned before it by prolepsis or anticipation, than which nothing is more frequent in the sacred writers. The terms employed in the original to indicate the severity of the oppression are very expressive. They import *crushing and breaking to pieces*, a metaphor apparently drawn from the action of two mill-stones upon the substance placed between them, to which Henry strikingly compares the condition of the Israelites at this time under the grinding oppression of the two hostile powers on either side of them, the Ammonites and the Philistines. Another remark of the same commentator respecting this apostasy of Israel is well worthy of insertion here. 'God had appointed that if any of the cities of Israel should revolt to idolatry, the rest should make war upon them and cut them off, Deut. 13. 12, et infr. They had been jealous enough in this matter, almost to an extreme, in the case of the altar set up by the two tribes and a half, Josh. 22, but now they are grown so very bad, that when one city was infected with idolatry, the next took the infection, and, instead of punishing, imitated and outdid it; and therefore since they that should have been revengers to execute wrath upon them that did this evil, were themselves guilty, or bare the sword in vain, God brought the neighboring nations upon them to chastise them for their apostasy.'

9. *The children of Ammon passed over Jordan.* The Philistines probably harrassed the children of Israel in the south of Canaan, west of the Jordan; and the Ammonites the two tribes and a half to the east of that river. The spirit of conquest or of aggression, however, soon led the latter to cross the Jordan. It seems probable that they rather vexed and distressed the trans-Jordanic tribes, than kept them in entire subjection; and afterwards extended their incursions to the west of the Jordan. They were justly punished by the Amorites, for they had so utterly degenerated and conformed to their heathen neighbors, that Ezekiel, in addressing the Israelitish nation, ch. 16. 3, says by a bold figure, 'Thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother a Hittite.'

10. *Both because we have forsaken, &c.* They specify distinctly the two forms of their transgression; first, in departing wickedly from God, secondly, in serving idols. Under the deep impression of their guilt in this conduct, they made good the words of the prophet, Is. 26. 16, 'Lord, in trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them.' The first step of a sinner's return to God is the discovery of his own great guilt, and a sense of his deserved ruin, and this in order to be available must be ac-

*liver you* [k]from the Egyptians, and [l]from the Amorites, [m]from the children of Ammon [n]and from the Philistines?

12 [o]The Zidonians also [p]and the Amalekites, and the Maonites [q]did oppress you; and ye cried to me, and I delivered you out of their hand.

13 [r]Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more.

14 Go and [s]cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.

15 ¶ And the children of Israel said unto the Lord, We have sinned: [t]do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee; deliver us only, we pray thee, this day.

16 [u]And they put away the strange gods from among them,

[k] Ex. 14. 30. [l] Num. 21. 21, 24, 25. [m] ch. 3. 12, 13. [n] ch. 3. 31. [o] ch. 5. 19. [p] ch. 6. 3. [q] Ps. 106. 42, 43. [r] Deut. 32. 15. Jer. 2. 13.

[s] Deut. 32. 37, 38. 2 Kings 3. 13. Jer. 2. 28. [t] 1 Sam. 3. 18. 2 Sam. 15. 26. [u] 2 Chron. 7. 14, and 15. 8. Jer. 18. 7, 8.

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companied with the most sincere and penitent *acknowledgment* of his aggravated offences.

11. *And the Lord said, &c.* In what manner these reproofs were conveyed to the Israelites, we are not informed. It was probably through the medium of some inspired prophet, or of the high priest, whose duty it was to learn the will of heaven in all trying emergencies.

14. *Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen.* Which ye have not served upon compulsion, but which ye have freely and voluntarily chosen. The Most High does not turn away his ear from their prayers, nor sink them in utter despair, yet he sends a sharp and upbraiding answer, of which the immediate effect would be to awaken their consciences, and confound them under a sense of their baseness and ingratitude. Many a time they had been delivered and those very oppressors subdued under them; yet they had vilely sinned against their own mercies. He therefore refers them for help to the gods whom they had served, to rebuke their folly and convince them of the weakness of these lying vanities. Yet the emphatic declaration, 'I will deliver you no more,' is to be understood conditionally, in case their idols were kept among them; for the divine threatenings always imply a reserve of mercy to the truly penitent. (1) If God appears to frown upon the returning sinner, let him not despair; it is no more than his desert, indeed, if he be utterly rejected; but with the Lord there is mercy and forgiveness, and a heart of overwhelming kindness is sometimes temporarily concealed by an aspect of wrath. (2) When we are brought to a real sense of our sins, we shall see the vanity and insufficiency of those things to make us either safe or happy, in which we formerly trusted.

16. *They put away the strange gods.* Heb. אלהי הנכר *elohë hannëkâr, the gods of the stranger.* In coming before God not only is every excuse for sin to be renounced, and the plea of *guilty, guilty,* sincerely to be made, but if we would approve our repentance real, the sins we confess are instantly to be discarded. When this is the case, and our transgres-

and served the LORD: and [x]his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.

17 Then the children of Ammon were gathered together, and encamped in Gilead. And the children of Israel assembled themselves together, and encamped in [y] Mizpeh.

18 And the people *and* princes of Gilead said one to another, What man *is he* that will begin to fight against the children of Ammon? he shall [z]be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead?

## CHAPTER XI.

NOW [a]Jephthah the Gileadite was [b]a mighty man of valor, and he *was* the son of an

sions are truly our bitterness and burden, though we may stand trembling under the black review, yet there is hope.——¶ *His soul was grieved.* Not that there is really any grief in God, for being infinitely happy in himself, he is inaccessible to any such emotion; but it is spoken after the manner of men, to represent to us more forcibly the abounding compassions of his heart. He acted towards his people like one who felt for their sufferings, like a kind father, who cannot but be grieved over the afflictions of his children. He had pity upon them, restraining his severities, and giving a new and merciful complexion to his dispensations towards them. The Heb. is 'shortened, contracted, straitened;' a term expressive of a state of mind the opposite of equanimity, long-suffering, forbearance; implying at once a sympathy with suffering, and a kind of *impatience* in redressing it. How consoling the thought that no prodigal returns to God but his paternal heart yearns over him, touched with a feeling of his wretchedness, and ready to embrace the most miserable of sinners.

17. *The children of Ammon were gathered together.* Heb. יצעקו *yitzhaku, were cried together;* were convened by means of *criers*, sent over the country in every direction, to stir up all the enemies of Israel. ——¶ *Encamped in Mizpeh.* There were several places of this name, but as the war here described was waged on the east of the Jordan, the Mizpeh alluded to in the text was undoubtedly that in the trans-Jordanic half-tribe of Manasseh, and of which an account is given, Josh. 11. 3.

18. *The people* and *the princes said.* Heb. העם שרים *hâam sârim, the people, the princes said;* indicating, by a remarkable phraseology, how closely related, not to say identified, were the *people* and the *rulers* among these eastern tribes. Though the nominal distinction existed, yet the interests of each were so completely the same, that their respective denominations are as it were merged in each other. How different the spectacle presented by the *governments* of nearly every European nation for the last two thousand years, and continued to the present day!——¶ *Shall be head*, &c. Shall not only take the conduct of the present war, but when the war is over shall, as a reward for his services, be continued as the governing head of this people. This verse

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[x] Ps. 106. 44, 45. Isai. 63. 9. [y] ch. 11. 11, 29. Gen. 31. 49.

[z] ch. 11. 8, 11. [a] Heb. 11. 32, called Jephthae. [b] ch. 6. 12. 2 Kings 5. 1.

harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah.

2 And Gilead's wife bare him sons; and his wife's sons grew up, and they thrust out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house; for thou *art* the son of a strange woman.

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comes in here as an introduction to the following narrative.

## CHAPTER XI.

1. *Now Jephthah—was a mighty man of valor.* More properly perhaps, 'had become.' The original היה *hâyâh*, is not merely a verb of existence, but denotes the *transition* of its subject, from one state to another. When its meaning is simply 'is,' or 'was,' it is almost invariably omitted in the original. Here, however, it is inserted, and probably hints at the *process* by which Jephthah had *gradually* become distinguished.——¶ *The son of an harlot.* Heb. אשה זונה *ishâh zonâh, a woman, a harlot.* Not begotten in lawful wedlock. The Jewish commentators, for the most part, give a softening exposition of the term here employed, as if it imported merely a concubine, or a gentile, i. e. a foreign or strange woman, not one of the Israelitish race, as she is termed in v. 2. But without doing violence to its ordinary and most legitimate sense, we know not how to depart from the rendering of the text. At the same time, it is to be observed, that our limited knowledge of the actual state of manners and society in those ancient periods, prevents us from affirming, that the word conveys precisely the idea of *public addictedness to degrading vice*, which its modern acceptation imports. It may have indicated a character somewhat less vile and iniquitous, but the ambiguity of the term is not sufficient to cover all disgrace in Jephthah's origin. His extraction, however, whatever it was, was the fault and disgrace of his parents rather than of himself, and a man should not be reproached with the unhappiness of his birth, when his own conduct bespeaks him deserving a more honorable relation.——¶ *Gilead begat Jephthah.* One of the descendants of the Gilead mentioned Num. 32. 1; Josh. 17. 1, 3, and bearing his name. To what tribe he belonged is not certain, but probably that of Manasseh beyond the Jordan. 1 Chron. 7. 14.

2. *Gilead's wife.* His lawful wife, in contradistinction from Jephthah's mother.——¶ *Thou shalt not inherit,* &c. That he was not entitled to share in the inheritance was a matter of course, for even the children of the lawful *secondary* wife or concubine were not admitted to this privilege, Gen. 21. 10, and 25. 6, much less the issue of such an illicit connexion as that in question. But Jephthah's brethren were probably actuated by some secret motive of jealousy or envy, which they would fain conceal by the plea of illegitimacy and outlawry here advanced; for it does not appear that his expulsion from his father's house was *necessary* simply on this account. At any rate, he evidently regarded it as a gross outrage upon his rights, v. 7, and one which the elders and magistrates of the city connived at and abetted. The pretence of legal right is often a mere cover to the foulest wrongs and in-

3 Then Jephthah fled from his brethren, and dwelt in the land of Tob: and there were gathered [c] vain men to Jephthah, and went out with him.

4 ¶ And it came to pass in process of time, that the children of Ammon made war against Israel.

[c] ch. 9. 4. 1 Sam. 22. 2.

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juries.——¶ *Of a strange woman.* Heb. אשה אחרת *ishâh a'hereth, of another woman.* That is, other than his lawful wife, and probably a foreigner. See on Ex. 1. 8; Deut. 29. 26; Jer. 22. 26.

3. *Fled from his brethren.* Heb. מפני אחיו *mippenë ahauv, from the face of his brethren.*——¶ *In the land of Tob.* A region so called perhaps from the name of the individual who was its first or most distinguished inhabitant. Its precise locality is not known, but from the facility of communication it was doubtless in the near vicinity of Gilead. Comp. 2 Sam. 10. 6, 8.——¶ *Were gathered vain men to Jephthah, and went out with him.* Heb. ריקים אנשים *rëkim anâshim, empty men;* that is, idle, worthless, profligate men, a lawless rabble. The original רקים is a term of great reproach, being the same with 'Raca,' in the New Testament. The meaning evidently is, that Jephthah, being without any inheritance or family connexions to afford him a subsistence, and being expelled from his native place, became an adventurer, and his character having brought around him a number of brave but idle men, perhaps similarly circumstanced, he made predatory incursions into the neighboring countries. This is what is meant by 'going out with him,' a phrase frequently applied to warlike and plundering inroads upon an enemy's territory. Probably they went out particularly into the land of the Ammonites, to retaliate the incursions which the latter made into Israel; and Jephthah's success or skill in these freebooting expeditions acquired him so much reputation, that the people would naturally be led to look to him when they wanted a military leader. The mode of life here indicated, is precisely that which was followed by David, when *his* reputation brought around him men of similar character to these followers of Jephthah. This kind of military robbery is far from being considered dishonorable in the East. On the contrary, the fame thus acquired is thought as fair as any that can be obtained through any class of military operations. An Arab or Tartar desires no higher or brighter distinction than that of a successful military robber; and to make that fame unsullied, it is only necessary that his expedition should not be against his own nation or tribe.

4. *The children of Ammon made war against Israel.* Or, perhaps more properly, '*had* made war,' and were now encamped in Gilead. We are here carried back in point of time to the period mentioned ch. 10. 17, the historian having returned from his digresssion concerning the parentage and early life of Jephthah. The words 'in process of time,' Heb. 'after days,' probably refer to the period immediately antecedent to the expulsion of Jephthah. Many days after he had been thrust out in disgrace, he was brought back again with honor.

5 And it was so, that when the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob:

6 And they said unto Jephthah, Come, and be our captain, that we may fight with the children of Ammon.

7 And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, [d]Did not ye hate me, and expel me out of my father's house? and why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress?

8 [e]And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, Therefore we [f]turn again to thee now, that thou mayest go with us, and fight against the children of Ammon, and be [g]our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.

5. *Went to fetch Jephthah.* Heb. לקחת *lakahath, to take;* that is, to persuade to go. See Note on Josh. 24. 3, and on Gen. 2. 15. This was undoubtedly with the approbation, if not with the express direction of Jehovah.

6. *Come, and be our captain.* The manner in which God overrules the ill-meant actions of men to the furtherance of his designs is here very observable. If Jephthah had not been, as he was, the object of his brethren's unkindness, he had lost the opportunity to exercise and improve his martial genius, and so failed to signalize himself in the eyes of his countrymen. So it often happens that the providences which are, to appearance, our greatest misfortune, are necessary to fit us for the work for which God designs us.

7. *Did ye not hate me and expel me,* &c. Though the act of his expulsion was primarily that of Jephthah's brethren, yet these elders had either actively aided in it, or by forbearing to prevent or punish the injury, had virtually made themselves partakers in the guilt of it; and with this he plainly charges them. 'Magistrates that have power to protect those that are injured, if they do not do them right, really do them wrong.' *Henry.* ——¶ *Why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress?* Not that Jephthah was unwilling to save his country, but he thought fit to give them a hint of their former unkindness, that they might repent of it, and in future be more sensible of their obligations. Thus Joseph humbled his brethren before he made himself known to them. The same language too may be applied by Christ to impenitent sinners, who after doing what in them lies to expel the Saviour from his inheritance in their own hearts, in the church, and in the world, still fly to him and supplicate him for succor in the day of their distress.

8. *Therefore we turn again unto thee.* This cannot be meant of a *local* turning or returning to Jephthah, for the words were obviously spoken at the first interview, from which they had not yet retired. The phrase doubtless has reference to *a change of mind, a turning again in the state of their feelings towards him.* It is as if they had said, 'We are convinced that we have done thee wrong, and that thou hast just ground of complaint; but we renounce the feelings we have formerly cherished, and we now come to acknowledge

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[d] Gen. 26. 27.

[e] ch. 10. 18. [f] Luke 17. 4. [g] ch. 10. 18.

9 And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, If ye bring me home again to fight against the children of Ammon, and the LORD deliver them before me, shall I be your head?

10 And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, [b] The LORD be witness between us, if we do not so according to thy words.

11 Then Jephthah went with

[b] Jer. 42. 5.

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our fault and to make thee full reparation. As a proof of our sincerity we proffer thee this honor, which shall counterbalance the dishonor we have put upon thee.' The incident may serve to remind us, (1) That the least we can do when we have injured a fellow-being, is to confess frankly our wrong, and ask his pardon. (2) That we should beware of despising or trampling upon any man, so as to make him our enemy, for we know not how much need we may have of his friendship and services before we die. (3) That men of worth who are undervalued, disparaged, and ill-treated, should bear it with meekness and cheerfulness, leaving it to God to vindicate their good name in his own way. Their judgment shall finally come forth as the noon-day.

9. *If ye bring me home again.* If ye recal me from the place where I am now fixed, to the place from whence I was expelled.——¶ *Shall I be your head?* Not only your leader in this war, but permanent judge and chief magistrate. Having to deal with persons whom he had reason to distrust, he determines to bind them to their compact by the most unequivocal assurances. 'Jephthah's wisdom had not been answerable to his valor, if he had not made his match beforehand. He bargains therefore for his sovereignty ere he wins it.' *Bp. Hall.* In all our agreements it is well to be explicit and solemn, that afterwards there may be no room for subterfuge or evasion. As the service before him was one in which he would naturally endanger his life, he deems it right that he should be duly rewarded, especially as he seems to have thought it was only in this way that he could effectually secure himself against the treacherous designs of his brethren, whose ill will and injuries he had once experienced. That there might also have been some tincture of ambition insinuating itself into his motives, is perhaps not improbable. The spirit of pious dependence, however, on the divine blessing, argues strongly in favor of his general spirit. He does not speak with confidence of his success, but qualifies it with a peradventure—'if the Lord deliver them before me,'—as if intending to remind his countrymen, to look up to God, as he himself did, as the giver of victory.

10. *The Lord be witness between us.* Heb. שמע בנותינו *shomaa benothēnu, be the hearer between us.* They confirm their promise by the solemnity of an oath, appealing to God's omniscience as the judge of their present sincerity, and to his justice as an avenger, if they should afterwards prove false to their engagements. 'Whatever we speak, it concerns us to remember that God is a hearer, and to speak accordingly.' *Henry.*

11. *Then Jephthah went with the elders.* Thus evincing a generous forgetfulness of all their previous

the elders of Gilead, and the people made him [i] head and captain over them: and Jephthah uttered all his words [k] before the LORD in Mizpeh.

12 ¶ And Jephthah sent messengers unto the king of the children of Ammon, saying, What hast thou to do with me, that thou art come against me to fight in my land?

13 And the king of the children of Ammon answered unto the messengers of Jephthah,

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[i] ver. 8. [k] ch. 10. 17, and 20. 1. 1 Sam. 10. 17, and 11. 15.

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wrongs and indignities. No injuries should make us implacable; we must forgive as we hope to be forgiven. ——¶ *And Jephthah uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh.* Or, Heb. 'for Jephthah uttered all his words,' &c. That is, all the words pertaining to the solemn compact which had now been entered into. The words seem to be inserted to explain how it was that the *people*, as affirmed in the preceding clause, made him head and captain over them. The arrangement had first been concluded upon at Gilead between Jephthah and the elders. But this was not sufficient. He would have it solemnly repeated and ratified after entering the camp at Mizpeh, between himself and the whole assembled congregation. In order to give it the utmost validity, and preclude all future misunderstanding, the *people* must confirm the act by their own choice, and this is said to have been done 'before the Lord,' to indicate the religious and solemn manner in which the transaction was conducted, as if under his immediate inspection and sanction. See on Josh. 4. 13.

12. *Jephthah sent messengers*, &c. A measure in the highest degree honorable to the equity, prudence, and piety of Jephthah, who herein conformed to the rule of conduct prescribed by Moses, Deut. 20. 10-18, which was, not to make war with nations out of Canaan, till messengers had been sent with proposals of peace. Though a mighty man of valor, yet he delighted not in war for its own sake, and was desirous, if possible, to prevent the effusion of blood by a peaceable accommodation. How vastly different this from the spirit of most military chieftains! *They* are glad to seize upon any, even the slightest pretexts for an appeal to arms. But here, though the newly elected captain of Israel might, perhaps, have been justified in repelling force by force without any preliminary negotiations, yet if he can, by showing them the injustice of their conduct, persuade the invaders to retire, he will not compel them by the sword. If the children of Ammon could convince him that Israel had done them wrong, he was ready to restore the rights of the Ammonites; if not, it was plain by their invasion that they did Israel wrong, and he should by no means submit to it. This, though in an Israelite, was acting under the influence of that religion which teaches us to follow peace with all men, and never to seek redress by forcible means till every fair proposal is rejected.——¶ *What hast thou to do with me. that thou comest against me*, &c. Spoken thus in the first person, in the name both of God and of Israel.

[l] Because Israel took away my land, when they came up out of Egypt, from Arnon even unto [m] Jabbok, and unto Jordan: now therefore restore those *lands* again peaceably.

14 And Jephthah sent messengers again unto the king of the children of Ammon:

15 And said unto him, Thus saith Jephthah, [n] Israel took not away the land of the children of Ammon:

16 But when Israel came up from Egypt, and [o] walked through the wilderness unto the Red sea, and [p] came to Kadesh;

17 Then [q] Israel sent messengers unto the king of Edom, saying, Let me, I pray thee, pass through thy land: [r] but the

[l] Num. 21. 24, 25, 26. [m] Gen. 32. 22. [n] Deut. 2. 9, 19.

[o] Num. 14. 25. Deut. 1. 40. Josh. 5. 6. [p] Num. 13. 26, and 20. 1. Deut. 1. 46. [q] Num. 20. 14. [r] Num. 20. 18, 21.

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13. *Because Israel took away*, &c. One who seeks a pretext for a quarrel will never be at a loss to find one; yet it speaks much in favor of the general peaceableness and inoffensiveness of Israel towards their neighbors, that their enemies, when intent upon hostilities against them, are obliged to look three hundred years back for a specious occasion. If the Ammonites had been conscious of a valid claim, their demand should have been published before invading Israel. But we have no intimation of this, and the claim now preferred was evidently trumped up to serve the present occasion, as affording a colorable pretence of justice in the invasion; showing that they who are destitute of conscience and honesty, are often very unwilling to appear so. Jephthah, however, in what follows, stripped their conduct of its specious disguise, and showed conclusively how false and arrogant were their pretensions.——¶*My land.* Speaking in the name both of the children of Ammon and Moab, over whom unitedly he seems, at this time, to have reigned as king.

15. *Israel took not away*, &c. In order to evince beyond dispute, the falsehood and futility of the enemy's claims upon these lands, Jephthah goes into a recapitulation of the leading circumstances of Israel's coming into possession of them. He admits that they had indeed taken the territories in question, but they took them not from the Ammonites or Moabites, whom they were expressly forbidden to molest on their march, but finding them in possession of Sihon, king of the Amorites, they took them from him in just and honorable warfare, in consequence of an unprovoked attack upon them. It might, indeed, be true, that prior to Israel's arrival in the country, the Amorites had taken these lands from the Moabites or Ammonites, Num. 21. 26; Josh. 13. 25, but this was no concern of theirs, nor were they bound to recognize the previous title of any people whatever. This was his first plea in support of his claims, which extends to v. 22.

17. *Then Israel sent messengers*, &c. So far were they from offering the least violence to the children of Esau or of Lot, that when refused a passage through their countries, though able, if they had chosen it, to have opened their way by force, they ra-

king of Edom would not hearken *thereto*. And in like manner they sent unto the king of Moab; but he would not *consent*. And Israel [s]abode in Kadesh.

18 Then they went along through the wilderness, and [t]compassed the land of Edom, and the land of Moab, and [u]came by the east side of the land of Moab, [x]and pitched on the other side of Arnon, but came not within the border of Moab: for Arnon *was* the border of Moab.

19 And [y]Israel sent messengers unto Sihon king of the Amorites, the king of Heshbon; and Israel said unto him, [z]Let us pass, we pray thee, through thy land unto my place.

20 [a]But Sihon trusted not Israel to pass through his coast: but Sihon gathered all his people together, and pitched in Jahaz, and fought against Israel.

21 And the LORD God of Israel delivered Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they [b]smote them: so Israel possessed all the land of the Amorites, the inhabitants of that country.

22 And they possessed [c]all the coasts of the Amorites, from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and from the wilderness even unto Jordan.

23 So now the LORD God of Israel hath dispossessed the Amorites from before his people Israel, and shouldest thou possess it?

[s] Num. 20. 1. [t] Num. 21. 4. Deut. 2. 1–8. [u] Num. 21. 11. [x] Num. 21. 13, and 22. 36. [y] Num. 21. 21. Deut. 2. 26. [z] Num. 21. 22. Deut. 2. 27.

[a] Num. 21. 23. Deut. 2. 32. [b] Num. 21. 24, 25. Deut. 2. 33, 34. [c] Deut. 2. 36.

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ther underwent the fatigue of a long march to compass their territories, than to set a foot upon them, much less to seize them for their own use. ——¶ *In like manner they sent unto the king of Moab.* Of this deputation, however, the history no where else gives us any account.

20. *Trusted not Israel to pass through his coast.* That is, through his dominions; as also, v. 22. The word signifies not only the borders of a country, but the territory included in them. Those who are themselves conscious of a disposition to oppress the weak, and take undue advantages of the simple, will generally give others credit for being actuated by the same spirit, and consequently withhold their confidence in circumstances where they are sensible they could not be confided in themselves.

23. *The Lord God of Israel hath dispossessed the Amorites.* Another branch of Jephthah's argument in proof of Israel's right to the land. God gave them the country by giving them the victory over him who possessed it. The great Proprietor of the earth, the King of nations, bestowed it upon them by an express and particular conveyance, such as vested in them a title that none could gainsay, Deut. 2. 24, 'I have given into thy hand Sihon and his land.' ——¶ *Shouldest thou possess it?* Heb. תירשנו *tirâshennu, shouldest thou inherit him*; i. e. the Amorite; the nation, according to Heb. idiom, being taken for the country which it occupied. He appeals to them whether

24 Wilt not thou possess that which [d] Chemosh thy god giveth thee to possess? So whomsoever [e] the Lord our God shall drive out from before us, them will we possess.

25 And now *art* thou any thing better than [f] Balak the son of Zippor king of Moab? did he ever strive against Israel, or did he ever fight against them,

26 While Israel dwelt in

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[d] Num. 21. 29. 1 Kings 11. 7. Jer. 48. 7.
[e] Deut. 9. 4, 5, and 18. 12. Josh. 3. 10.
[f] Num. 22. 2. See Josh. 24. 9.

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they could suppose that God had given them the land in such an extraordinary manner, merely in order that they should restore it again to the Ammonites or Moabites.

24. *Wilt thou not possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee?* Without really attributing any divinity to the Ammonitish idol, Jephthah here argues with them on their own admitted principles. 'It is a maxim with you, as among all nations, that the lands which they conceive to be given by their gods, they have an absolute right to, and should not relinquish to any claimant whatever. You suppose that the land which you possess was given by your god Chemosh, and therefore you will not relinquish what you believe you hold by a divine right. In like manner we are fully assured that Jehovah our God, who is Lord of heaven and earth, has given the Israelites the land of the Amorites; and therefore we will not give it up.' The ground of Jephthah's remonstrance was evidently sound and impregnable.——¶ *Them will we possess.* Heb. אותו נירש *otho nirâsh, him will we inherit;* i. e. his or their land; as above, v. 23.

25. *Art thou any better than Balak?* That is, probably not morally better, but hast thou any better title? Yet Balak, who was then king of Moab, from whom the greatest part of these lands had been taken by the Amorites, who had most interest in the matter, and was best able to enforce his claim, if he had thought fit—Balak did not once object to our settlement then, nor offer to molest us in the enjoyment of our possessions. If he then acquiesced in this disposition of the lands, if the title of Israel had not been disputed upon their first entrance upon them, what grounds had the Ammonites to do it now? They had possessed the country quietly for three hundred years, and even though their title had been less clear at first, yet seeing no claim had been made during that long period of time, they had obtained a right by prescription, which the law of nations would clearly have acknowledged. A title so long unquestioned was to be presumed to be unquestionable. The following therefore is the sum of Jephthah's argument relative to the matter in dispute. (1) The Ammonites had lost their lands in their contests with the Amorites. (2) The Israelites conquered these lands from the Amorites, who had waged an unprincipled war against them. (3) God, the Maker, Proprietor, and Disposer of heaven and earth, had given these lands by special grant to the Israelites. (4) In consequence of this, they had had possession of them for upwards of three hundred years. (5) These lands were never reclaimed by the Ammonites, though they had repeated opportunities to do

[g]Heshbon and her towns, and in [h]Aroer and her towns, and in all the cities that *be* along by the coasts of Arnon, three hundred years? why therefore did ye not recover *them* within that time?

27 Wherefore I have not sinned against thee, but thou doest me wrong to war against me: the LORD [i]the Judge [k]be judge this day between the children of Israel and the children of Ammon.

28 Howbeit the king of the children of Ammon hearkened not unto the words of Jephthah which he sent him.

29 ¶ Then [l]the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead, and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over *unto* the children of Ammon.

30 And Jephthah [m]vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said,

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[g] Num. 21. 25. [h] Deut. 2. 36. [i] Gen. 18. 25. [k] Gen. 16. 5, and 31. 53. 1 Sam. 24. 12, 15.

[l] ch. 3. 10. [m] Gen. 28. 20. 1 Sam. 1. 11.

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it, whilst the Israelites dwelt in Heshbon, in Aroer, and the coasts of Arnon; but they did not reclaim them, because they knew the Israelites held them legally. Consequently every subsequent claim was effectually barred, and the present pretensions of Ammon were unsupported and unjustifiable.

27. *The Lord, the Judge, be judge this day.* Not by pronouncing sentence verbally, like human judges, but by awarding the victory to the side which he sees to be in the right. In this way he leaves the controversy to be decided. When we have justice and truth on our side, we may confidently appeal to the God of truth for a decision in our favor.

29. *The Spirit of the Lord came upon him.* Endowing him in an extraordinary manner for the work before him, and thus giving him convincing testimony that his cause was good.——¶ *Passed over Gilead,* &c. Or, Heb. 'passed through;' i. e. for the purpose of collecting recruits and increasing his forces to the utmost.

30. *Jephthah vowed a vow,* &c. Vows were very common under the Mosaic dispensation. They were even encouraged by God himself, in order that his people might have opportunities of manifesting the love that was in their hearts by offerings that were not enjoined, and services that were not commanded. In cases of difficulty or distress, where it appeared of more than ordinary importance to secure the divine favor and protection, the patriarchs of old had resorted to vows, and bound themselves, in case he should vouchsafe to them the desired blessing, to render unto him according to the benefits he should confer upon them. Thus Jacob, when he had just left his father and family in order to seek in a foreign land a refuge from his brother's vengeance, *vowed,* that if the Lord would be with him and restore him to his home in peace, he would take God entirely for his God, and devote to him a tenth of all that he should possess, Gen. 28. 20–22. In the time of Moses the whole people resorted to the same measure, in order to obtain success against the Canaanites, Num. 21. 2. This, it

If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into my hands,

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must be confessed, has a legal appearance, and looks like offering to make a bargain with God; but vows may certainly be made in perfect consistency with the liberal spirit of the Gospel; for it is intimated that under the Gospel, yea even in the so termed millennial age, such a practice should obtain, Is. 19. 21, and we know that Paul both made a vow himself, Acts 18. 18, and united with others in services to which, by a voluntary engagement, they had bound themselves. It is, however, to be remarked, that a vow, to be acceptable to God, must have respect to things in themselves lawful. It cannot cancel a former obligation, or superinduce one that is repugnant to it. All our obligations to obedience proceed from God. He has a supreme right to give laws to his creatures; but if men, by entering into vows, could free themselves from the obligation of his laws, they might then, whenever they pleased, by their own act defeat his authority. Whatever therefore is in itself forbidden by God, and for that reason unlawful, cannot, by being made the matter of a vow, become justifiable. So that he who has vowed to do what cannot be done without sin, is so far from being obliged to perform his vow, that he is, notwithstanding his vow, obliged not to perform it; the original wrong of making such a vow being greatly aggravated by keeping it. Now in applying these remarks to the case of Jephthah, nothing is clearer than that human sacrifices were ever an abomination to the Lord, and that he had again and again interdicted them, with the strongest expressions of abhorrence and reprobation. Deut. 12. 31. Indeed it was one of the grand reasons assigned for driving out the Canaanites, that they were in the habit of offering their sons and daughters to Moloch in the fire, i. e. of making burnt offerings of them, as is reasonably to be inferred. It cannot be doubted, therefore, that if Jephthah really vowed such an offering to the Lord, it was utterly unlawful for him to perform it. His duty would have been to humble himself before God, and deeply repent of having entertained for a moment such a criminal purpose. But the *intrinsic character* of such a vow, supposing Jephthah made it, is one thing, and *its moral quality as issuing from a mind, in such a state as his then was*, is another. The vow itself may have been unlawful, and yet in making it he may not have been aware of its real nature. Though his motives may have been devout, and in a measure acceptable to heaven, yet he may have uttered it in great darkness and ignorance. Let the circumstances of his case be considered. Let it be borne in mind that he was born in a loose and degenerate period of the Israelitish nation, and that he was bred up beyond Jordan, far from the tabernacle, and in the near neighborhood of heathen tribes, with whose idolatrous practices he would naturally become familiar. Under these circumstances, in a foreign land, and associated with a band of outlaws and freebooters who lived by rapine and violence, is it to be wondered at that he should, previous to his appointment as a leader of Israel, have sunk into a state of semi-paganism from which he had by no means recovered, even at the time of his signal victory over the Ammonites? And in this benighted state, is it not easily conceivable that he might have thought to propitiate Jehovah by such a kind of offering as was sometimes presented by heathen worshippers, especially if we suppose he was further influenced by some confused recollections of Abraham's intended sacrifice of Isaac by divine command? Would it be unnatural for a man thus imperfectly instructed, on the eve of an important battle, in an excited state of mind, and under the promptings of a blind zeal, to bind himself, on condition of his success, to evince his gratitude by what he conceived a heroical and almost superhuman act of devotion? To us there is nothing violent or forced in the supposition; nothing inconsistent with the general tenor of the narrative; and in forming a correct estimate of his conduct on the occasion, it is exceedingly important, if possible, to ascertain *the real state of mind by which it was prompted;* for it is only in this, that we can find an adequate clew to the right interpretation of his vow. Before entering, however, upon the more particular explication of this, it may be well to advert for a moment to the different kinds of vows in use among the Jews, and determine, if possible, to what class of them this of Jephthah properly belonged.

Of these the most important was the *'herem* (חרם), which was accompanied by an *execration*, and answered to the *anathema* of the Septuagint and the Greek Testament. The person or thing thus vowed unto the Lord, was said to be 'devoted' to him, and could not be redeemed, Lev. 27. 28. When it respected *persons*, or animals of any kind, it implied that they were *devoted to destruction;* but when it respected *things*, it implied that they were either to be *utterly consumed by fire*, or to be irrevocably *dedicated to the Lord* for religious purposes. In its application to persons it seems to have been uttered by public authority and to have been restricted to *heathen*, *aliens*, and *enemies of God*, as the Amalekites, Canaanites, &c., Judg. 1. 17; Num. 21. 1-3, nor do we any where read that a father or a master of a family was ever authorised thus to anathematize, execrate, or devote to destruction one of his own household. The utter destruction of Jericho with all that it contained, excepting Rahab, affords a striking example of the *'herem.* Its grand feature was, that in no case could its objects, whether persons or things, be properly redeemed from the use, condition, or destiny to which they had been devoted. In this respect it differed from a second and milder kind of vow, usually termed *neder* (נדר), by which one engaged to perform some particular act of piety, as for instance, to bring an offering to God, or otherwise to dedicate any thing to him. The objects of this kind of vow were various, as clean or unclean beasts, lands, the tithes of lands, houses, and the person of the vower himself; of all which we have a detailed account, Lev. 27. These various objects, with the single exception of clean beasts, might be *redeemed* at the rate, and on the conditions specified in that chapter.

31 Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the child-

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Now it is supposed by many critics that the vow of Jephthah is to be classed under this head. The sacred writer in speaking of it says, וידר נדר *vayiddar nëder*, *and he vowed a neder*, not a *'herem*, and consequently, they say, it was such a vow as he might have redeemed by paying the prescribed ransom of thirty shekels, which was the fixed estimation for a female, Lev. 27. 4. But to this it is replied by Rosenmüller, that the terms *nâdar*, *to vow*, and *neder*, *a vow*, are *generic*, comprehending both the redeemable and irredeemable class of vows. In proof of this he cites Num. 21. 2, where immediately after the words, ‘ And Israel *vowed a vow* (וידר נדר) unto the Lord,’ &c., it is added, ‘ then I will *utterly destroy* החרמתי *ha'haramti*, their cities,’ from which it plainly appears that the *'herem* may be comprised under the *neder*, though every *neder* was not a *'herem*. As therefore the words alone do not enable us to determine satisfactorily the nature of the vow, it must be gathered from the circumstances. For ourselves, after an attentive consideration of all the incidents connected with the transaction, we are brought to the conclusion, that as far as Jephthah in making the vow had *any* statute of the divine law in his mind, it was rather that of the *'herem*, than of the simple *neder;* that his predominant idea was that of the *irrevocable devotement to death* of the object contemplated in his vow. But after all, it may well be doubted, whether Jephthah had his eye upon any particular precept or provision of the Mosaic code. For the reason before mentioned, we imagine his acquaintance with the law was extremely limited; that the distinction between the different classes of vows was a matter of which he had little or no conception; and that he was prompted at the moment far more by a *superstitious impulse*, than by a zeal according to knowledge. He knew in the gross that vows were recognised in the religious institutes of his people; that there was such a thing as a person's being *devoted* without redemption to God; and that such a vow, when taken, was sacredly binding; and this we conceive was about the sum of his knowledge on the subject. Possessing then this very partial degree of light, and actuated by an intense solicitude as to the result of the engagement, he seems to have rushed precipitately into the assumption of a vow, which proved a fearful snare to his soul. That he became, however, subsequently more enlightened as to the import of the vow, and discovered a mode of dispensation from the literal execution of it, we shall endeavor to show in the sequel. But we are treating, at present, solely of his *intention* at the time, which, if we mistake not, was just that which the reader would naturally apprehend from the simple letter of the text. This we trust will be still more clearly illustrated in the Notes that follow.

31. *Whatsoever cometh forth.* Or, Heb. אשר יצא *asher yëtzë*, *whosoever cometh forth.* The rendering given to these words will no doubt be governed in a great measure by

ren of Ammon, [n]shall surely be the Lord's, [o]and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering.

[n] See Lev. 27. 2, 3, &c. 1 Sam. 1. 11, 28, and 2. 18.

[o] Ps. 66. 13. See Lev. 27. 11, 12.

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the translator's views of the real nature of the vow uttered on this occasion; as whether it had reference primarily to a human being or a brute animal. To us the former appears decidedly the most probable. Admitting that the Heb. היוצא *hayotzë*, *which cometh forth*, may apply equally to men or animals, yet the phrase, 'cometh forth to meet,' seems to imply an intelligent act, *a coming forth with a design*, which could scarcely be predicated of any but a human being. Sheep, bullocks, and other animals fit to be offered in sacrifice, are usually enclosed in pastures and stalls, and could not be expected to come out to meet him. How unlikely, then, was it that any of the animals allowed for sacrifice should come forth from 'the doors of his house;' to say nothing of the probability that a dog or some unclean animal might meet him, which could neither lawfully be consecrated to the Lord, nor offered as a burnt sacrifice.——¶ *Shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.* As much depends, in forming a judgment of the real character of Jephthah's vow, upon the correct explication of the terms in which it was made, it will be proper here to advert to the leading opinions of commentators on this point. These may be ascertained from the four following proposed modes of rendering, each of which has had its zealous advocates, whose collective treatises on the subject would amount to several volumes.

(1) The first is that given above; '*Whosoever* cometh out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return from the children of Ammon, shall be the Lord's, and I will offer *him* up for a burnt offering.'

(2) The second is that adopted in the text of our common English Bibles;—'*Whatsoever* cometh out of the doors of my house, &c., shall be the Lord's, *and* I will offer *it* up for a burnt offering.'

(3) The third is that given in the margin of the English Bible;—'*Whatsoever* cometh out of the doors of my house, &c., shall be the Lord's, *or* I will offer it up for a burnt offering.'

(4) The fourth was proposed about sixty years since by Dr. Randolph, and is this;—'Whosoever cometh out of the doors of my house, &c., shall be the Lord's, and I will offer (to) Him (viz. the Lord) a burnt offering.'

Of these, the first is that adopted by the Septuagint and Vulgate versions, and is undoubtedly the sense which the words of the original, if viewed in themselves, apart from any moral considerations, do most naturally present. That this rendering supposes Jephthah to have had a human sacrifice in his thoughts when he made the vow, is undeniably true, and without doing violence to the letter we know not how to avoid this conclusion. We are aware that it is objected to this, that Jephthah was at this time undoubtedly a pious man, for it is said in the immediate connexion, that he was under the influence of the Spirit of God, and it cannot be supposed that such a man, under such an influence, could deliberately vow to God that he would commit murder—that he would vow to put to death the first person who should come forth to congratulate him, whether it might be man, woman, or child, yea, even if it should be his own, his only daughter. But to say nothing of the impropriety of applying the invidious term *murder* to Jephthah's *intention*, we do not think much stress can be laid upon the fact of his being said to be at this time under the influence of the Spirit of God, for it does not appear that this phrase, as used by the Old Testament writers, indicates by any means such a kind of influence as is intended in the New Testament by one's being led, prompted, governed by the Holy Spirit. In the latter case it denotes mainly a *moral, spiritual, sanctifying* influence; in the former, it simply implies the divine bestowment of remarkable gifts, whether *physical* or *intellectual*, for the performance of a particular work, or the discharge of a particular office. The endowments indicated by it were seated rather in the head and the body, than in the heart, so that taken by itself it affords us no clew to the *moral character* or *actions* of the subject of it. A similar train of remark is applicable also to another objection urged on the ground of Jephthah's being enrolled by Paul, in the eleventh of Hebrews, among the eminent men who had obtained a good report through faith. This is supposed to afford conclusive proof that he was a good man, and therefore that he could not have been guilty of a conduct so contrary to the divine law. But it is extremely doubtful whether the faith celebrated in that chapter, was in every instance a justifying and saving faith, in relation to the individuals mentioned. The apostle's object seems to be merely to illustrate the power of *a firm belief in the divine testimony*, which may doubtless exist separate from a renewed heart. We learn elsewhere, from the same authority, that a man might have the faith of miracles so as to remove mountains, and yet not be a good man. We do not affirm that Jephthah was not a good man, yet we derive no absolute assurance from the simple fact of his *putting a strong faith in the divine promises*, that he was an eminent saint, and incapable of making such a vow as we have supposed above. The objections, therefore, drawn from these sources against the interpretation now recited do not seem to carry with them any great weight. Jephthah may still have meant to vow that he would offer up a human sacrifice. But that such a sacrifice was *actually* made does not, we conceive, necessarily follow from this admission. Of this, however, more in the sequel.

The second rendering, which is that of the translators of the English Bible, is liable perhaps to no serious grammatical objection, though, we think, less punctiliously faithful to the original than the former, for the reasons stated in the previous note. It is, however, the view given by Josephus, who makes Jephthah promise to 'offer in sacrifice what living creature soever should first meet him,' and he affirms that the vow, in that sense, was executed by him; 'he sacrificed his daughter as a burnt offering, offering such an oblation as was neither conformable to the law, nor acceptable to God.' The same sense is given by the Targum of Jonathan, and is perhaps the sense which has on its side the balance of authorities, both Jewish and Christian. But the question whether Jephthah actually sacrificed his daughter, is still to be decided on grounds independent of the balance of authority as to the literal purport of the vow.

The celebrated Rabbi, David Kimchi, who flourished in the twelfth century, seems to have been the first who proposed the third translation, or that given in the margin of the English Bible. According to this interpretation, the Heb. copulative ו *and*, is to be translated *or*, and the sense of the vow will then be, 'Whatsoever cometh out of the doors of my house, I will, if it be a thing fit for a burnt offering, make it one; *or*, if not, will consecrate it to his service.' This would suppose him, in making the vow, to have had a mental reserve, which would allow him to act as the *exigency of the case* might require. It gives him an *alternative* which by the other mode of rendering is effectually precluded. This construction, however, is certainly liable to a very important grammatical objection. Though it is unquestionable that the particle ו is sometimes used as a disjunctive, and properly rendered 'or,' as Ex. 12. 5, 'hand *or* foot;' 21. 15, 'father *or* mother;' 2 Sam. 2. 19, 'right hand *or* left,' yet it may be doubted whether it is ever used to disjoin things so completely as this translation supposes. Gussetius (Comm. Ling. Ebr.) contends that to give ו a disjunctive force, it is essential that the terms between which it stands should not be related as genus and species, or the one member comprehending the other, as otherwise it would be as absurd as to say, 'Thou shalt not injure a man or his head,' the one term evidently including the other. So in the present instance, the clause 'It shall be the Lord's,' is obviously, he affirms, the general, while 'It shall be offered up for a burnt offering,' is merely the included particular, indicating the *special manner* in which it shall be the Lord's. This we cannot but regard as the interpretation required on strict philological principles, and if the passage were rendered, 'It shall be the Lord's, *even* I will offer it up for a burnt offering,' it would come, we believe, still nearer to the genuine force of the original. We assent, therefore, to the remark of Noble, (Plen. Inspir.) that 'this rendering is extremely forced and harsh, and one which critics have acquiesced in only to get rid of what they esteemed a greater difficulty. It also makes the second clause of the vow entirely unnecessary; for if Jephthah meant to say, that whatsoever came out of his house should be consecrated to the Lord, in such a manner as was suitable to its nature, this is fully conveyed in the first clause; and the addition of the second, separated by *or*, instead of helping to determine his meaning, is of no use but to perplex it.' For these reasons we are compelled to reject the third hypothesis, as wholly unsustained by a just philological support.

The fourth and last, is Dr. Randolph's rendering, 'Whosoever cometh out, &c., shall be the Lord's, and I will offer (to) Him a burnt offering.' According to this translation, Jephthah's vow will consist of two parts. The first, that whatsoever *person* or *object* should come forth of his doors to meet him should surely be the Lord's; i. e. should be *dedicated, consecrated for ever to his service.* The second, that he would, beside this, offer to Jehovah a burnt offering. According to the rendering in our common version, the *very same* object or person who should 'surely be the Lord's,' was to be offered up for a burnt offering. According to that now proposed, they were to be *different* objects. This explanation appeared to Bp. Lowth so signally happy and conclusive, that he speaks of it as having 'perfectly cleared up a difficulty, which for two thousand years had puzzled all the translators and expositors, had given occasion to dissertations without number, and caused endless disputes among the learned.' Such a commendation, from such a source, undoubtedly entitles the proposed explanation to great respect, but it has still failed to satisfy the mass of commentators, and as we think for very good reasons. The sense hereby given to the original is not warranted by common usage. The Hebrew, it will be observed, is והעליתיהו עולה *vehaalithihu olâh*, where the suffixed pronoun הו *hu*, is joined to the verb to express the thing offered, and not another example can be found, in which verbs of *offering* or *sacrificing* are accompanied with a suffix pronoun denoting *the Being to whom the offering is made.* On the contrary, instances of a precisely parallel usage to the present are of no uncommon occurrence. Thus 1 Sam. 7. 9, 'Then Samuel took a sucking lamb, *and offered it (for) a burnt offering* (ויעלהו עולה *veyaalëhu olâh*,) wholly to the Lord.' See also 2 Kings 3. 27, where we meet with a case exceedingly similar to this of Jephthah. What Jephthah, according to the most direct import of his words, is supposed to have promised to do, the king of Moab, when sore pressed by the kings of Israel, Judah, and Edom, is affirmed actually to have done; and in precisely the same words, joined in the same construction; 'Then took he his eldest son, that should have reigned in his stead, *and offered him* (for) a burnt offering, (ויעלהו עולה) upon the wall.' These words differ from Jephthah's only in the mood, tense, and person of the verb, and in the common variety in spelling of the noun, the same suffix הו and apparently in the same relation being used in each.

On the whole we are constrained to dissent from this, as well as the preceding interpretation, and to acknowledge, that after all the labors of the learned, nothing satisfactory has yet been produced to fix a sense upon the passage, which should exclude the idea that a human sacrifice was either *intended* by the vow, or might be its *unintended result.* It is still undeniable that the old common translation, sanctioned by the venerable Septuagint version, is that which naturally flows from the words, if taken in their legitimate construction. Certain too it is, that if Jephthah had spoken English, and had said, 'Whosoever cometh out of the doors of my house, &c., shall be the Lord's, and I will offer him up for a burnt offering;' and these words had been translated from English into Hebrew, they could not otherwise have been exactly rendered than by the very words which now stand in the He-

32 ¶ So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them: and the Lord delivered them into his hands.

33 And he smote them from Aroer even till thou come to [p] Minnith, *even* twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel.

34 ¶ And Jephthah came to [q] Mizpeh unto his house, and behold, [r] his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she *was his* only child: beside her he had neither son nor daughter.

[p] Ezek. 27. 17.

[q] ch. 10. 17, and ver. 11. [r] Exod. 15. 20.

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brew Bible. At the same time, as we shall presently endeavor to show, though we do not doubt that this language expresses fairly what was in Jephthah's mind at the time of making the vow, yet whether he *actually executed* the vow in this sense of it admits of very serious question. See farther on v. 39.

32. *Jephthah passed over unto.* That is, passed through or over the intermediate regions lying between him and the enemy.

33. *Thus the children of Ammon were subdued*, &c. Heb. יכרעו *yikkâreu*, *were greatly humbled*, or, if we may be allowed to fabricate a term for the purpose, '*were Canaanized*,' i. e. made to share the fate of the Canaanites; which to a Hebrew ear would be precisely the import of the original. How far his success on this occasion is to be construed as an answer to his prayers, and a token of the divine acceptance of his vow, it is not possible to determine. By some it is considered a strong argument in favor of the *milder* view which is taken of the vow. 'Would God,' it is asked, 'have sanctioned in this manner a gross act of deliberate murder? Would not this have been the very way to deceive his people, and to make them think he was pleased with such offerings as the heathen presented unto Moloch? And when, in future ages, he punished his people for offering human sacrifices, might they not justly have pleaded, that he, in this instance, had both approved and rewarded them?' To this we answer, that the public interest of the whole Jewish people was more regarded in the bestowment of the victory, than the private hopes or wishes of Jephthah. Unworthy or faulty instruments were often employed by the Most High in effecting his kind purposes for Israel, and we see no reason to doubt that the result would have been the same *with the same means*, even had no vow whatever been uttered. Moreover, it is a high presumption in weak mortals to read in the events of providence a proof, that God makes himself a party to compacts of their own voluntary proposing, let them be ever so well intended. His counsels are a great deep, and it is at our peril that we put such unauthorized constructions upon his dispensations. 'No man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them.'

34. *With timbrels and with dances.* From this, and from 1 Sam. 18. 6, where David's triumphal return from the defeat of Goliath and the Philis-

35 And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he [s]rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I

[s] Gen. 37. 29, 34.

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tines is mentioned, it appears to have been an ancient custom for women to go forth to meet returning conquerors with musical instruments, songs, and dances. Jephthah's daughter, on this occasion, undoubtedly came forth, not alone, but at the head of a band or choir of maidens, who joined with her in these joyful congratulations.——¶ *She was his only child.* This circumstance is mentioned to point out an additional cause of the poignancy of his distress. It is well known how intensely anxious the Hebrews were for posterity, and as Jephthah could only hope for descendants through his daughter, the sorrow he expressed is quite natural, even under the milder interpretation of his vow.——¶ *Besides her he had neither son nor daughter.* Or, Heb. 'there was not to himself either son or daughter;' implying, as some of the Jewish commentators think, that though he had no other children of his own, yet his wife, the widow of a former husband, had. Others take the original ממנו *mimmenu*, with our translators, as used for ממנה *mimmenâh*, *besides her*, a view of the phrase which Rosenmüller seems to approve.

35. *Alas, my daughter, thou hast brought me very low.* Heb. הכרע הכרעתני *hakraa hikrateni*, *bowing thou hast made me to bow;* generally spoken of bowing down upon the knees for purposes of religious reverence, or from feebleness and exhaustion, especially when overcome in battle. Here the idea seems to be, that from being *highly elated* by the recent victory, he had now, in meeting his daughter under the present circumstances, been suddenly and wofully *depressed* and *struck down*, as it were, *to the earth.* His *exultation* was changed to *humiliation* and *grief.* His daughter had done to him what the Ammonites could not. The evident bitterness of emotion which he betrayed, on meeting his daughter, clearly shows that he then looked upon himself as bound by the tenor of his vow to make her life a sacrifice. Although the idea of consigning her to a state of perpetual celibacy and seclusion, of being bereft of her society, and seeing the extinction of his name in Israel certain, could not but greatly affect the heart of a father, yet the anguish which he now expressed appears too intense and excruciating to be caused by any thing but the conviction that she *must die*—die a martyred victim to his precipitate vow.——¶ *Thou art one of them that trouble me.* Heb. 'thou hast become among my troublers.' This language might, in reality, have been more properly addressed by the daughter to her father, but his meaning obviously is, that she had innocently and involuntarily become a source of unspeakable distress to him. 'He answers the measures of her feet with the knockings of his breast. Her joy alone hath changed the day, and lost the comfort of that victory which she enjoyed to see won. It falls out often, that those times and occasions which promise

[t] have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and [u] I cannot go back.

36 And she said unto him, My father, *if* thou hast opened thy mouth unto the LORD, [x] do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as [y] the LORD hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, *even* of the children of Ammon.

[t] Eccles. 5. 2. [u] Num. 30. 2. Ps. 15. 4. Eccles. 5. 4, 5. [x] Num. 30. 2.

[y] 2 Sam. 18. 19, 31.

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most contentment, prove most doleful in the issue; the heart of this virgin was never lifted up so high as now, neither did any day of her life seem happy but this; and this only proves the day of her solemn and perpetual mourning. It is good, in a fair morning, to think of the storm that may arise ere night, and to enjoy both good and evil fearfully.'—*Bp. Hall.*——¶ *I have opened my mouth unto the Lord.* I have solemnly vowed to him; implying that the vow was not only conceived in the mind, but uttered with the lips. Vows, unless they were verbally enounced, seem not to have been regarded as binding, Num. 30. 3, 7, 9, 13; Deut. 23. 22, 23. Although the narrative does not represent him as informing her specifically of the burden of the vow, yet from what follows it is plain that she soon became aware of it, either from the extreme distress which he now manifested, or from his subsequent explicit disclosures. The sacred writers frequently omit the mention of minor circumstances, contenting themselves with the statement of leading facts, and leaving it to the judgment of the reader to supply the omitted links of the chain. ——¶ *I cannot go back.* I cannot recall the vow myself, now that it is solemnly uttered, nor can any power on earth release me from its obligation.

36. *My father*, if *thou hast opened thy mouth*, &c. A striking pattern of filial piety and obedience, and of heroic zeal for what she conceived the honor of God and of Israel. So rejoiced was she at the victory, as redounding to the good of her country, that she is willing to be herself offered up as a thank-offering for it, and thinks her life well bestowed when laid down for such a purpose. True indeed it is, that if her father's conduct was wrong in making the vow, hers, when viewed intrinsically in itself, could not be right in concurring in it; the same moral character would attach to both; but it were vain to expect that her knowledge in such a matter would go beyond that of her father. How can it be supposed that a youthful maiden should have had clear views of the import of the divine law on such a subject, when her father's mind was enveloped in darkness? Her generous self-devotion, therefore, is still entitled to our highest commendation. Her involuntary ignorance excuses her infirmity, and if she believed when she uttered these words, that she was to be put to death, neither Greece nor Rome, with all their heroes and heroines, can furnish an instance of sublimer self-sacrifice than this of the humble maid of Israel. Had it occurred among these boasting people, instead of the plain unvarnished tale of the sacred historian, we should have had it pressed

37 And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: Let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows.

38 And he said, Go. And he sent her away *for* two months:

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on our admiration with all the pomp of eloquence. Indeed it cannot be doubted, had but Jephthah and his daughter been heathens, that the very persons, who now find in the transaction nothing but a pretence for vilifying the Scriptures, would then have extolled the whole as exhibiting the finest example of the most noble constancy, the most disinterested virtue.

37. *Let me alone for two months.* The word in the original is that used for *slacking*, *relaxing*, *loosing one's hold* upon any thing; see Note on Josh. 1. 4. The whole narrative affords nothing more obscure and remarkable than this request. On what custom was it founded? Is there an intimation of any thing similar in any other part of the Scriptures, or in any thing relative to oriental manners and usages? We know of nothing, and must sit down resigned in our ignorance. Yet we think the inference fair, that children, both sons and daughters, were occasionally dedicated by Jewish parents to the perpetual service of God at the tabernacle or temple, as we know was the case with Samuel, though he, in after life, seems to have obtained a dispensation from the vow of his mother. Where this was the case with youthful females, it is probable the custom obtained of their retiring for a season in groups from domestic scenes to sequestered places, in token of regret at being thereby excluded the privilege of a place among the ancestors of the future generations of Israel, and perhaps of the Messiah. Not that we can suppose that companies of unprotected maidens would forsake for days and weeks the habitations of men, and spend their time in roving about over hill and dale in the open air, for they would surely stand in need of food and shelter, and how on this supposition were they to procure them? but they probably withdrew to some retired places of abode, remote from populous villages, where, under the care of pious matrons, they passed the allotted time in the observance of such rites and ceremonies, as were appointed for the purpose; occasionally, perhaps, walking abroad in solemn and mournful processions. It is at least difficult to conceive, in a civilized and religious state of society, and especially in Eastern countries, of any *other* mode, in which a company of youthful damsels could, without a very ill appearance, spend a season of retirement from their usual place of residence. Let the question be put to any reflecting mind, in what other light can a transaction of this nature be viewed? Did the Jewish maidens, under these circumstances, sojourn unattended for weeks and months, wandering up and down on the mountains? Is it conceivable that they should have adopted a measure so utterly abhorrent to female decorum and so completely at war with the very first rudiments of oriental prejudice? If then, upon abandoning their own homes, they must have resorted to *some kind* of habitations, what were they? what, but a species

and she went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains.

39 And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who [z] did with her *according* to his vow

of abode *designed for the purpose?* For ourselves, the narrated *facts* of the Scripture allow us to come to no other conclusion. If then such a custom existed at the time to which our narrative refers, it is very supposable, that Jephthah's daughter on an occasion like the present, with her impending fate full before her, should have been desirous to avail herself of a usage, originally indeed designed for another purpose, but not inappropriate to this, and so have requested a respite of a few weeks from the doom that awaited her. What more fitting employment during that dread interval, than to mingle her regrets with those whose lot her own in one respect so much resembled, though *they* were exempted from the destiny to which *she* had meekly submitted?

39. *Did with her* according *to his vow.* Heb. ויעש לה את נדרו *vayaas lâh eth nidro, did to her his vow.* The original, if we mistake not, affords some more latitude of construction, in respect to the mode of executing the vow, than is allowed by our present rendering. According to the latter, we are required to believe that he adhered to the very letter of the vow, and *actually offered her as a burnt offering,* which we have endeavored to show is the unforced legitimate sense of the vow itself. According to the former, which is more general and indefinite, we are not, we conceive, absolutely shut up to the adoption of this sense. The phrase, 'he did to her his vow,' strikes us as not specifying the *precise manner* in which the vow was performed, but as leaving us at liberty, provided the exigency of the case requires it, to understand the writer as saying, that he did to her what was *equivalent* to his original vow, what was accepted in lieu of it, instead of the identical thing which the vow contemplated. The verisimilitude of this rendering will be just in proportion to the probability, derived from other sources, that he did *not* actually put his daughter to death; that in the interval of the two months' respite which she besought, he had come to a different view of the demands of duty in the case, the amount of which was, a clear conviction that the *literal fulfilment* of the vow was not obligatory upon him. In support of this hypothesis, which we think to be the true one, we offer the following considerations.

(1) It is not expressly stated that she was offered up for a burnt offering. Instead of saying, as would naturally, on that supposition, have been expected in a transaction of such moment, 'He did with her according to his vow, *and offered her up for a burnt offering to the Lord,*' the writer simply affirms, 'He did to her his vow, *and she knew no man;*' as if this were intended to be explanatory of the *manner* in which the *doing* of the vow was accomplished, viz. by devoting her to a life of celibacy. Why else is this latter circumstance mentioned, but to show wherein the accomplishment of the vow consist-

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[z] ver. 31. 1 Sam. 1. 22, 24, and 2. 18.

ed? If she were really put to death, is it not strange that the *fact of her death* is not once spoken of? But if she were only doomed to a state of perpetual virginity, the reason of the expression is at once obvious. It may indeed be objected that no other instance of devoting a person to virginity occurs, nor have we evidence that parents possessed any such right. This we admit; but neither, on the other hand, does the Scripture afford evidence, that parents possessed the right of devoting their children to death, nor exhibit, among the chosen people, an example of the fact of such a devotement. The intrinsic probability, therefore, is as strong on the one side as the other. Nor is the objection more valid, that supposing her only devoted to God, there was no reason why she should remain unmarried; since Samson and Samuel, both of whom were devoted to God from the womb, were both married. But the case is extremely different between a man and a woman. The former was at liberty to serve God, in any way that he judged agreeable to his will; but the latter, if she had married, would have been under the control of her husband, who might in a variety of ways have interfered with the discharge of the duties which the vow implied. It was therefore necessary that she should remain unmarried, and that she should also be secluded in a great measure from society itself; *that* being the way in which the object of entire consecration could be most effectually attained. Moreover, such a sentence would come the *nearest* of any other to the letter of his vow. She would henceforth become *dead* to the world, and in her perpetual celibacy the line of his posterity become extinct for ever. It would therefore almost amount to a positive immolation of her.

(2) It does not appear by whose hands such a sacrifice could have been offered. Not by the high priest, or any regular member of the priesthood, for with all the deplorable laxness, ignorance, and degeneracy that prevailed, it is incredible that any officiating priest should have tolerated for a moment, in the face of such explicit prohibitions as Moses had given, the oblation of a human sacrifice. And not by Jephthah himself, for this would have been a transgression of the Levitical law, which enjoined that every offering should be made by the hand of the priest, and at the place where the tabernacle and altar stood. This is rendered still more certain by an important circumstance mentioned in the beginning of the next chapter. It will be remembered that the tabernacle was at this time at Shiloh, *in the tribe of Ephraim.* Now immediately after the conclusion of the war with the Ammonites, we find Jephthah engaged in a bitter war *with the Ephraimites.* This makes it in the highest degree improbable that he should, in the very heat of the quarrel, have gone into the heart of *that* tribe to offer such a sacrifice, *even* had it been lawful. If then, there is the utmost reason to believe that such an offering was *not* made by the high priest or any inferior priest—that it was *not* made by Jephthah himself—and that it was *not* made at Shiloh, the appointed place of sacrifice, what reason is there to suppose it was made at all?

(3) From all the circumstances, the probability, we think, is very

strong that Jephthah availed himself of the provisions of the law, in respect to devoted persons and things; in other words, that during the two months' interval, he had become better instructed in regard to the subject of vows in general under the Mosaic statutes, and ascertained that a dispensation, in his case, was practicable. We have already remarked that vows were encouraged under the law, and that besides the *'herem* or anathema, *persons* or *things* might be devoted to God. But where this was the case, the law permitted that a valuation should be made of the devoted person or thing, and that the money should be regarded as a ransom for it, or an offering be presented in its stead. If a human being were devoted, the estimation was to vary according to the sex or age of the person, Lev. 27. 2-13, but for an adult female, it was thirty shekels of silver. Now supposing that Jephthah, at the time of making the vow, had no distinct recollection or knowledge of this law; supposing even that the vow, as it emanated from his lips, partook more of the character of the *'herem* than the *neder;* yet is it conceivable, that when the execution of it was postponed for two months, and the affair had become notorious throughout the nation, and was the subject of general discussion and great lamentation, there was no person in all Israel who once thought of this law? Would not the agonized father, besides devoting to it his own intensest study, consult the priests on the subject? And would not the priests acquaint him with the provisions of the law in reference to a case of casuistry like the present? And what would naturally be the result? Could he fail to come to the conclusion, that such a sacrifice as he first intended was not only unlawful, but in the face of the numerous pointed prohibitions against it would amount to nothing short of downright murder? Would he not learn, that as an *offering* (עוֹלָה, the term he had employed in his vow) was in its own nature incompatible with a *'herem* (חרם), and that the law having made no provision for the latter being substituted for the former, he was even, according to the very terms of his vow, rightly understood, not only released, but prohibited from performing it? Under these circumstances, would he, could he persevere in his original intention? Is it not more probable, that after deep deliberation in concert with the authorised expounders of the law, he yielded to the conviction, that although his solemn pledge did not originally contemplate any such alternative, yet it *might* be embraced in the provisions now alluded to—that it *might* come under the class of redeemable vows? He would be more encouraged to avail himself of this dispensation, on the ground of the darkness of his mind at the time of coming under the engagement. It was not an act of *wilful* disregard of the divine statutes relative to this point, but one rather of *misapprehension* and *infirmity*, though from its rash and reckless character by no means innocent. He was still, we may suppose, ready to humble himself before God in view of his precipitancy, and while he paid the ransom price that delivered his daughter from death, piously resolved, by way of punishing himself for his rashness, to fulfil his vow in her which he had vowed: and she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel,

*civil excision* from among the living. He accordingly, we conceive, consigned her henceforth to a state of perpetual seclusion and celibacy—of living consecration to God—and in this manner 'did unto her his vow,' though in a mode of execution, which did not, in the first instance, enter into his thoughts.

Thus, on the whole, after weighing all the circumstances and arguments bearing upon the case, we are led to decide upon the much disputed point, whether Jephthah really sacrificed his daughter. To our mind the evidence for the negative clearly preponderates. At the same time, we do not, as will be seen, deduce it from the terms of the vow, or any fancied *contingency of purpose* in Jephthah's mind at the time of making it. We believe that it was made under the *prevailing impression* that a human sacrifice would be the result; but that, although his conduct was contrary to the Scriptural precept forbidding men 'after vows to make inquiry,' he became subsequently more enlightened, and by a careful study of the law, aided by its proper ministers, he ascertained the possibility of being released from the dilemma in which he had so thoughtlessly ensnared himself. Perhaps the most valid objection to the view given above, is that which would assume the form of the question, Why, if such were the fact, is the narrative so constructed as to give rise almost inevitably to the impression, that the *literal immolation* of Jephthah's daughter actually took place? Without allowing that an inability to answer this question satisfactorily ought to be considered as essentially weakening the force of the arguments adduced above, we may suggest in reply, that the Spirit of inspiration may have framed the record as it now stands, marked by a somewhat ambiguous aspect, *in order to guard against a light estimate of the obligation of vows.* We do not affirm this to have been the design, but it is certainly conceivable that if it had been *expressly stated* that the vow in its literal sense had not been performed, it might have gone to relax somewhat of the apprehended sacredness of all such votive engagements, and led men to think that God himself might easily dispense with them. Whereas, as it is now worded, and would be perhaps most naturally understood, it would inspire far other sentiments, and lead men at once to be very cautious in making, and very punctilious in performing their vows.

39, 40. *And it was a custom in Israel.* Heb. ותהי חק בישראל *vattehi 'hok be-yisraël.* The phraseology of the original is peculiar, the verb being of the fem., the noun of the masc. gender. The literal rendering we take to be, 'and she became an ordinance in Israel;' i. e. her case beame a precedent; it gave rise to an established custom in Israel. But what particular custom is alluded to, whether that of dedicating maidens to God, as Gusset supposes, or that of going at stated times to commemorate the fate of Jephthah's daughter, as others contend, is not clear. The latter appears, on the whole, most

40 *That* the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year.

probable.——¶ *Went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah.* Heb. מימים ימימה *miyâmim yâmimâh, from days to days;* but a day in Scriptural idiom is often used for a year; for which reason the marginal reading is properly 'from year to year.' The original for 'to lament,' (לתנות *lethannoth*), is a term of very questionable import. It is rendered differently according to the different opinions of expositors, as to the nature of the vow, and the mode of its fulfilment. Those who think that she was sacrificed, are satisfied with the present version; those who dissent from this, contend earnestly for the marginal rendering, 'to talk with,'—meaning that the daughters of Israel went yearly to condole with and to comfort her. It must be admitted, that the evidence for this latter sense of the word is by no means slight, if we refer to the only other instance in which it occurs, Judg. 5. 11, where, though translated 'to rehearse'—'there shall they *rehearse* the righteous acts of the Lord,'—yet the idea of *colloquy*, of *mutual address*, is clearly involved. This is confirmed by Kimchi, the Jewish commentator, who thus paraphrases the words before us, 'That indeed, with their friendly discourse they might comfort her concerning her virginity and her solitary state of life.' The ancient versions, however, with one accord, give the sense of *lamenting*, *bewailing*, a circumstance undoubtedly to us of no small weight, though not absolutely decisive in estimating the true import of the term. The probability is, that the word means in its most general sense, 'to praise, to celebrate, to commemorate,' and would therefore denote that the daughters of Israel kept a few days' anniversary to commemorate this transaction, *whatever were its result.* For aught that appears from the language itself, she might have been living at the time. Indeed take the passage as it reads; 'The daughters of Israel went to lament the daughter of Jephthah;' and the question is, *what* in her, or respecting her, did they lament? It is not said they lamented her *death;* and to affirm that they did, is to beg the question. They might have lamented only what they and Jephthah's daughter had lamented before, viz. her *virginity.* On the whole, though some difficulties attend *every* interpretation hitherto advanced of Jephthah's vow and its consequences, yet the foregoing has perhaps the fewest and the least, and receives most countenance both from philological and moral considerations.

We may close our observations on this remarkable portion of holy writ by suggesting, (1) *That we be cautious in making vows.* 'Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few.' It may sometimes be useful to bind ourselves by solemn vows, to evince our gratitude and confirm our regard for the divine glory. But such vows should be deliberately and discreetly made, and should extend to those things only that are clearly lawful in themselves,

## CHAPTER XII.

AND [a] the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and went northward, and said unto Jephthah, Wherefore

[a] See ch. 8. 1.

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and serviceable to the interests of religion. Strict inquiry should be made into the nature and extent of the proposed engagements, before we enter into them. Thus Solomon declares, 'It is a snare to a man to devour that which is holy, and after vows to make inquiry.' If we have rashly pledged ourselves to do what the law of God prohibits, we must recede from our vow, and humble ourselves before our Maker for our precipitance. The forty conspirators, who swore that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul, and Herod, who swore that he would give his daughter whatsoever she should ask of him, had no right to bind themselves to such an extent, and would have sinned less in violating than in keeping their engagements. Let their case be a warning to us. (2) *That we be conscientious in performing them.* Where our vows are lawful and practicable they should be religiously kept. Better is it not to vow, than to vow and not perform. So Solomon exhorts; 'When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it, for he hath no pleasure in fools. Pay that which thou hast vowed.' Even though the rigid observance of our vows should subject us to great sacrifices, expense, and trouble, yet the obligation should be considered sacred, and the attempt to set them aside by the plea of inadvertence or of difficulty in the performance will only serve to bring upon us the heavy displeasure of God. If Jephthah, after having precipitately bound himself by a solemn engagement, felt constrained to adhere to its *spirit*, though released from the *letter*, and would not go back, notwithstanding the sacrifice was so great, so neither should we decline the performance of the most difficult of our vows. Let us remind ourselves of the sacredness uniformly attached in the Scriptures to obligations of this sort, and say with David, 'I will go into thy house with burnt offerings; I will pay thee my vows which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble.' And who is there that has not the responsibility of vows of some kind resting upon him? Who has not, in a time of sickness, or danger, or trouble, or alarm, determined with himself, that if he should be delivered, he would devote himself to the Lord and to the pursuit of heavenly things? Let all such look back and call to mind the vows that are upon them, and be admonished that Jephthah will rise up in judgment against the violation of them. Especially let us remember that in making a profession of religion, we have vowed to be the Lord's in a perpetual covenant of love, trust, and obedience. We have opened our mouths to him, and now we cannot go back without the shipwreck of truth, honor, conscience, and probably of salvation. Again therefore we say, let us be faithful to covenant engagements. (3) *Others' sorrows should be our own, and by partaking we should seek to alleviate them.* So was it with the companions of Jephthah's daughter, and so should it be with the sons passedst thou over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee? we will burn thine house upon thee with fire.

2 And Jephthah said unto

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and daughters of the true Israel, in all ages and climes.

## CHAPTER XII.

1. *The men of Ephraim gathered themselves together.* Heb. ויצעק איש אפרים *yitztzâëk ish Ephrayim, the man of Ephraim was cried together;* collective singular for the plural; i. e. summoned together by the voice of heralds passing to and fro through the tribe. The passive voice in Heb. often has a reciprocal import, and here probably is intended to convey the idea of a mutual *stirring each other up*, independent of the will of a superior, and a consequent flocking together in somewhat of a loose and tumultuary manner. With this as the leading idea of the passage before his mind, Jerome, in the Vulgate, has rendered it, 'And there arose a sedition in Ephraim;' on which Rosenmüller remarks, that he took the Heb. verb to imply that by mutual clamor and vociferation they excited themselves to sedition and tumult.——¶ *Went northward.* Heb. ויעבר צפונה *yaabor tzâphonâh, passed over northward.* Crossing the Jordan, they advanced in a northerly direction towards Mizpeh, where Jephthah now was. This region lay to the northeast, rather than directly north of the territory of Ephraim. See map.——¶ *Wherefore passedst thou over*, &c. Not over Jordan, for he was on the farther side of that river already; but simply over the intermediate regions between him and the scene of conflict. We have here a second proof of the haughty and turbulent disposition of the Ephraimites. They had no just ground whatever for their present bitter crimination of Jephthah. Their jealous and envious spirit towards Manasseh, was the only cause of the injurious charge, and violent threat which they now uttered. Although from being both the sons of Joseph they were nearer akin than any other of the tribes, yet between none other of the tribes was there such a burning spirit of rivalry and disaffection as between them. The conduct of the Ephraimites on this occasion, compared with their complaints to Joshua, and their hostile attitude towards Gideon, clearly evinces a disposition to lord it over the other tribes, with an authority and preeminence to which they were certainly not yet entitled. We are reminded by the incidents of the narrative, (1) That quarrels between brethren are usually most bitter and violent. 'A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city; and their contentions are as the bars of a castle.' (2) They who have done the greatest service to the cause of God, are not secure from the greatest insults, even sometimes from the pretended friends of that cause. The most spotless characters are often the chosen marks for the fangs of envy to fasten upon.

2. *And Jephthah said unto them*, &c. Jephthah's answer, at once firm but temperate, shows that their charge was as false as malicious; that he had called them, and they refused to come. The greatest boasters and

them, I and my people were at great strife with the children of Ammon; and when I called you, ye delivered me not out of their hands.

3 And when I saw that ye delivered *me* not, I [b] put my life in my hands, and passed over against the children of Ammon, and the LORD delivered them into my hand: wherefore then are ye come up unto me this day, to fight against me?

4 Then Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead, and fought with Ephraim: and

loudest pretenders are usually the greatest cowards; and they who are themselves most in fault, are often prone to shield themselves, by accusing the innocent.——¶ *I and my people were at great strife*, &c. Heb. 'I was a man of strife, and my people, and the children of Ammon greatly.' As if he had said, 'Although the quarrel was chiefly between us Gileadites and the Ammonites, and not between you and them, yet out of respect to you as brethren and confederates, I gave you an invitation to join our forces, yet you declined.' In reality, therefore, he had more cause to condemn them for their indifference to the fate of their brethren, than they him for taking the field without them. Reason is very apt to forsake those who renounce right. ——¶ *Ye delivered me not out of their hands.* That is, ye strove not, ye attempted not, ye did not what in you lay, to deliver me. See Note on Gen. 37. 21. It is not to be supposed that his deliverance and success were suspended *entirely* upon their efforts in his behalf.

3. *I put my life in my hands.* Heb. בכפר *bekappi, in my palm.* A strong orientalism, implying, 'I risked my life in a seemingly desperate undertaking.' 'The Hindoos use the same figure; and the idea seems to be taken from a man carrying something very precious in his hands, and that under circumstances of great danger. When a son who has been long absent returns home, his father says, "My son has returned from the far country with his life in his hand;" which means, he has passed through many dangers. "Last night as I went home through the place of evil spirits, I put my life in my hands." "The other day in passing through the forest, I put my life in my hands, for the beasts were near to me in every direction." "Danger! truly so; I put my life in my bosom." "O that divine doctor! my son was at the point of death, but he brought his life in his hand."'—*Roberts.* The same phrase occurs 1 Sam. 19. 5, and 28. 21; Job 13. 14; Ps. 119. 109. ——¶ *Wherefore then are ye come up unto me this day, to fight against me?* If God was pleased to give me the victory without you, and so far to make use of me for his glory, why should you be offended? Should not your resentment rather become gratitude, that you were spared both labor and danger? Have you any reason to fight against me? Is it not in effect to sin against God, in whose hand I have been only an unworthy instrument?

4. *Then Jephthah gathered together*, &c. Finding all his remonstrances vain, and the Ephraimites intent upon

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[b] 1 Sam. 19. 5, and 28. 21. Job 13. 14. Ps. 119. 109.

the men of Gilead smote Ephraim, because they said, Ye Gileadites [c] *are* fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites, *and* among the Manassites.

5 And the Gileadites took the [d] passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was *so*, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped, said, Let me go over; that the men of Gilead said unto him, *Art* thou an Ephraimite? If he said, Nay;

6 Then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth: and he said Sibboleth: for he could not

a quarrel, he was prompted, perhaps under the influence of undue excitement, to undertake to chastise their insolence. It is, at any rate, extremely difficult to justify such a signal revenge, though it be admitted that the provocation was very great. Even good men often lack the self-command which would enable them to bear with becoming calmness the ingratitude and calumny of others, and in a just cause are apt to be hurried on by their passions to unwarrantable lengths.——¶ *Ye Gileadites* are *fugitives of Ephraim*, &c. From the ambiguity of the original, it is not easy to ascertain precisely where the *point* of this reproach lies. According to the present translation, it is an insulting intimation that the Gileadites were the very scum and refuse of the two tribes here mentioned; but the following may be proposed as a more correct rendering of the Hebrew; 'And the men of Gilead smote Ephraim, because they (the Gileadites) said, Ye are fugitives of Ephraim;' i. e. a mere party, a remnant of the whole tribe, who have come hither without being sent, to molest and insult us, whereas the majority of the tribe would be more just and generous than to treat us in this manner. The ensuing words, גלעד בתוך אפרים בתוך מנשה *Gilâd bethok Ephrayim bethok Menassëh*, *Gilead was intermediate between Ephraim and Manasseh*, are probably to be enclosed in a parenthesis, intimating that Jephthah's army had taken a position between their own territory, and that of Ephraim, probably at the fords of the Jordan, in order to cut off their retreat. Accordingly it is said in the next verse, as we would translate the words, '*For* the Gileadites *had taken* the passages of the Jordan,' &c. As the successive companies of the Ephraimites approached the banks of the stream, to pass over into their own country, we suppose they were addressed in the manner above mentioned by the Gileadites. Still the clause is one of very dubious import.

5. *Those Ephraimites which were escaped.* Heb. פליטי אפרים *pelitë Ephrayim, the fugitives of Ephraim;* precisely the same phrase with that occurring in the verse above, and confirming the interpretation there given. We consider the drift of the writer in v. 5, 6, to be, to state in fuller detail, and with some additional particulars, the circumstances of the slaughter mentioned, v. 4.

6. *Say now Shibboleth; and he said Sibboleth.* The original differs only in the first letter, ס *samech*, instead of ש *sheen*. It is well known that several nations cannot pronounce certain letters. The sound

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[c] See 1 Sam. 25. 10. Ps. 78. 9. [d] Josh. 22. 11. ch. 3. 28, and 7. 24.

frame to pronounce *it* right. Then they took him and slew him at the passages of Jordan. And there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand.

of *th*, so familiar to English organs, cannot be pronounced by the people of some European countries, nor by the Persians, though a common sound among the Arabians. To this day, many of the German Jews cannot articulate this sound in reading their own Hebrew Scriptures, but substitute *ss*, as *baiss* for *baith*, *a house*, *bereshiss* for *bereshith*, *the beginning*. It has been remarked also, that *sh*, which is entirely wanting in many languages, is of peculiarly difficult pronunciation to persons whose organs have not in childhood been inured to it. The word chosen by the Gideonites as a test-word, signifies *ear of corn*, and also a *stream*, and was, perhaps, suggested by being the name of the object immediately before them, the river on the banks of which they stood. 'Sibboleth,' on the other hand, denotes *a burden*, and how these different objects were distinguished in the pronunciation of the Ephraimites, it is difficult to say. Differences of pronunciation, however, even among those speaking the same language, or the same dialect, are nothing extraordinary. In later times, Peter was easily distinguished as a Galilean in Pilate's hall by his pronunciation, Mark. 14. 70, and travellers in the East inform us, that the Arabic of Cairo, of Aleppo, and of Bagdad, is so different, that one who has made himself master of this language in one of these cities, cannot, without great difficulty, understand or be understood in the others. England itself offers considerable variety both of dialect and modes of pronunciation, and so probably does every other country.——¶ *He could not frame to pronounce it right.* Heb. לא יכין לדבר כן *lo yäkin ledabbĕr kĕn, he did not direct to speak it so;* i. e. so as he was required. The original does not say that he *could* not, but that he *did* not; because, perhaps, not suspecting the design, he may have uttered it rapidly in his usual manner. Still the present translation is by no means a bad one.——¶ *And slew him.* The predominant usage of the original is in reference to that kind of slaughter which was common in the case of animal victims offered upon the altar; i. e. by *cutting the throat, jugulation;* as if they made the inability of the organs of speech in the throat to utter certain sounds, a pretence for putting them to death in this manner. In view of the means here adopted by the Gileadites for detecting the fugitives of Ephraim, we can scarcely fail to reflect how closely they resemble those tests or standards of uniformity in religion, which under the pretence of promoting brotherly union are often made the means of persecution and exclusion. "Say now Shibboleth:" say exactly as we say, hold exactly as we hold, without the liberty to vary a single letter in your profession of faith, or we cannot let you pass for a Christian at all. May God teach us a better way of communion, a more comprehensive standard of truth! May He give us at once the spirit of a sound mind, and the feelings of a charitable heart!——¶ *There fell—forty and*

7 And Jephthah judged Israel six years: then died Jephthah the Gileadite, and was buried in *one of* the cities of Gilead.

8 ¶ And after him Ibzan of Beth-lehem judged Israel.

9 And he had thirty sons and thirty daughters *whom* he sent abroad, and took in thirty daughters from abroad for his sons: and he judged Israel seven years.

10 Then died Ibzan, and was buried at Beth-lehem.

11 ¶ And after him Elon, a

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*two thousand.* Heb. ארבעים ושנים אלף *arbaim ushenayim aleph.* As the Hebrew mode of enumeration is peculiar, the copulative ו *vau* here may perhaps imply simply *addition*, so that the sum will be 2,040 instead of 42,000. At the last census, Num. 26. 37, the whole tribe of Ephraim only amounted to 32,500, compared with which the last number appears far too great; especially as it is reasonable to believe that only a part of the tribe crossed the Jordan on this expedition.

7. *Was buried in one of the cities of Gilead.* Heb. בערי גלעד *beârë Gilâd, in the cities of Gilead.* A curious specimen of Rabbinical conceit and of the not unfrequent style of their exposition, is afforded in Rashi's remarks upon these words. From him we learn that the ancient Jewish doctors maintained that Jephthah, as a punishment for putting his daughter to death, was visited by a disease that loosened the joints of the different limbs and members of his body, and caused them to fall off one after another, from time to time, as he was passing to and fro over the country, and that they were buried separately, wherever they happened to drop, so that when he died, it could be said, from this general distribution of his members, that he was 'buried in the cities of Gilead!' But how a man could be in a travelling condition, while his body was thus falling to pieces, is a part of the story which is wisely passed over in silence. The phraseology is doubtless idiomatic, the plural being put for the singular, as Gen. 19. 29, where Lot is said to have dwelt, 'in the *cities*,' i. e. in one of the cities. So Jonah 1. 5, the *sides of the* ship appears to denote *one* of the sides.

8. *Ibzan of Beth-lehem.* The Beth-lehem here mentioned, if we may believe Josephus, was that in the tribe of Judah, and not that in Zebulun, of which see Josh. 19. 5. The Jewish critics, for the most part, consider this Ibzan to have been the same person with Boaz, spoken of in the book of Ruth; but the opinion rests upon conjecture alone. Nothing memorable is related of him except the circumstance mentioned in the next verse.

9. *Had thirty sons and thirty daughters.* Where polygamy was practised, such a numerous progeny is not surprising. Parallel instances in modern times are recited in abundance by eastern travellers. —— ¶ Whom *he sent abroad.* Or, Heb. החוצה *ha'hutzâh, out of doors.* That is, disposed of in marriage to other families. Hence the Vulg. paraphrastically, but not incorrectly, 'Whom he sending abroad gave to husbands;' and so in the ensuing clause, 'Took wives for his sons of the same number, bringing them into his house.' Ibzan's lot, in this

Zebulonite, judged Israel, and he judged Israel ten years.

12 And Elon the Zebulonite died, and was buried in Aijalon in the country of Zebulun.

13 ¶ And after him Abdon the son of Hillel, a Pirathonite, judged Israel.

14 And he had forty sons and thirty nephews, that [e] rode on threescore and ten ass colts: and he judged Israel eight years.

15 And Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died, and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, [f] in the mount of the Amalekites.

## CHAPTER XIII.

AND the children of Israel [a] did evil again in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord delivered them [b] into the hand of the Philistines forty years.

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[e] ch. 5. 10, and 10. 4. [f] ch. 3. 13, 27, and 5. 14. [a] ch. 2. 11, and 3. 7. and 4. 1, and 6. 1, and 10. 6. [b] 1 Sam. 12. 9.

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respect, contrasted strikingly with that of his predecessor Jephthah.

14. *Thirty nephews.* That is, grandsons; Heb. בני בנים *benë bânim*, *sons, of sons.* On the opulence and dignity implied in riding upon white asses, see ch. 5. 10, and 10. 4.

15. *In the mount of the Amalekites.* For a probable account of the reason why this place was so called, see on ch. 5. 14. It does not appear certain that any thing remarkable took place in the civil state of the Israelites, during the time of these latter judges, though Lightfoot supposes, with some plausibility, that the forty years' oppression of the Philistines *commenced* in the days of Elon the Zebulonite, and was gradually waxing more and more severe through the subsequent administrations. Previous, however, to the birth of Samson, it had not gained sufficient head to make it worthy of particular record in the inspired narrative. But it has been well remarked, that the happiest life of individuals, and the happiest state of society, is that which affords the fewest remarkable events. The people, in the main, enjoyed peace without, and freedom from discord and sedition, though still the leaven of their idolatrous propensities was secretly working and preparing them for new troubles in the end. As to these several judges, the principal fact mentioned in regard to each is, that he lived, acted as judge, and died. Death, the lot of man, at last claims his due of the great and the good, and whatever else we may hear of any man, we are sure to hear one thing—that he died: unless indeed our own departure hence anticipates his.

## CHAPTER XIII.

1. *Did evil again.* Heb. ויסיפו לעשות *yosiphu laaseth, added to commit;* i. e. by apostatizing from God's pure worship and falling into idolatry. See on ch. 3. 7, and 6. 11, and 10. 6.——¶ *Delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years.* This period is not to be understood as constituting an interregnum between Abdon and Samson, for this would not consist with the chronology given 1 Kings, 6. 1, or with the intimation v. 5 below, that the Israelites were *already* suffering under the rod of the Philistines when Samson was raised up for a deliverer. The probability is, as Samson is said to

2 ¶ And there was a certain man of [c] Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name *was* Manoah; and his wife *was* barren, and bare not.

3 And the [d] angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold, now, thou *art* barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son.

4 Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and [e] drink not wine,

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[c] Josh. 19. 41. [d] ch. 6. 12. Luke 1. 11, 13, 28, 31.

[e] ver. 14. Num. 6. 2, 3. Luke 1. 15.

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have 'judged Israel twenty years *in the days of the Philistines*,' i. e. during the period of their ascendency, that the other twenty is to be taken out of the times of the previous judges, which will carry us up at least to the time of Elon, as suggested by Lightfoot, ch. 12. 15, for the commencement of their oppression. In order to gain a still fuller view of the chain of events here recorded we must revert back to ch. 10. 6, 7, where it is said that the Lord was angry with his people, 'and sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the children of Ammon.' Of these two servitudes, the last, with the deliverance from it by Jephthah, is treated first. This occupies the two preceding chapters. Having dispatched that, the historian now returns back and takes up the history of the other oppression, and brings it down to the death of Samson.

2. *A certain man of Zora.* Of the city of Zora; a town in the tribe of Judah, but afterwards given to Dan, being situated near the confines of each tribe. Josh. 15. 33.——¶ *Of the family of the Danites.* That is, of the *tribe* of Dan. The word is properly a collective singular for the plural.——¶ *Was barren and bare not.* An emphatic repetition in varied phrase, of frequent occurrence in the sacred writers. Thus Gen. 11. 30, 'But Sarai was barren; she had no child.' John 1. 3, 'All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.' v. 20, 'And he confessed, and denied not.' 'If Manoah's wife had not been barren, the angel had not been sent to her. Afflictions have this advantage, that they occasion God to show that mercy to us, whereof the prosperous are incapable.' *Bp. Hall.*

3. *The angel of the Lord.* The uncreated angel, the Angel Jehovah, so often spoken of in the preceding narrative, and who appeared to Moses, to Joshua, to Gideon, and others. Evidence of this will disclose itself as we proceed.

4. *Beware—drink not wine*, &c. As the child, whose birth was now announced, was to be a Nazarite from the womb, the mother herself was to be subjected to the law of the Nazarites, that the sanctification of her son might commence from herself. She must, during the period of gestation and nursing, abstain from wine and every inebriating liquor, and all kinds of forbidden food. Things that would be lawful at another time, were to be refrained from now. The nourishment of her child would partake of the qualities of her own, and this future deliverer of Israel must be in the *strictest* manner and through every period an example of separation and consecration to God. As it was designed also that he should be a

nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean *thing:*

5 For lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no [f]razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be [g]a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall [h]begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.

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[f] Num. 6. 5. 1 Sam. 1 11.

[g] Num. 6. 2. [h] See 1 Sam. 7. 13. 2 Sam. 8. 1. 1 Chron. 18. 1.

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person of superhuman strength, there was perhaps a fitness in the mother's temperance as a *natural means* to produce this result, though a miraculous agency was requisite over and above all other means whatever. 'The mother must conceive the only giant of Israel, and yet must drink but water; neither must the child touch any other cup. Never wine made so strong a champion as water did here. He that gave that power to the grape, can give it to the stream. O God, how justly do we raise our eyes from our tables unto thee, which canst make water nourish and wine enfeeble us!' *Bp. Hall.*——¶*Eat not any unclean thing.* Unclean meats were forbidden to *all* Israelites at all times; but *especially* and *pre-eminently* so to the Nazarite, Lev. 11. 1–47. It was perhaps solely for this reason that the precept was repeated at this time and on this occasion; though Scott supposes, not unreasonably, that the distinction of meats was not strictly observed at this time, as otherwise she would scarcely have needed such caution.

5. *No razor shall come on his head.* Heb. יעלה על רשו *yaalëh al rosho, shall go up on his head.* The hair of his head shall neither be shorn nor shaven. Of this part of the Nazarite's vow, see on Num. 6.——¶ *For the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb.* For a full account of this peculiar feature of the Mosaic institute, see on Num. 6.—Oriental usage at the present day affords a striking parallel to what is here recorded. 'All who are married in the East,' says Mr. Roberts, 'have an intense desire for children. It is considered disgraceful, and a mark of the displeasure of the gods, to have a childless house. Under these circumstances, husbands and wives perform expensive ceremonies; and vow that should the gods favor them with a son, 'no razor shall come upon his head,' (i. e. except upon the 'corners,') until he shall be ten or twelve years of age. In all schools, boys may be seen with elf-locks of ten or twelve years' standing, giving a testimony to the solicitude, superstition, and affection of the parents, and a memorial of the favor of the gods.——¶*He shall begin to deliver Israel.* This intimated that Israel's oppression should endure long; for deliverance from it was not so much as to begin, not even the first step to be taken, till this child, now unborn, should grow up to years of maturity and become capable of undertaking it. And even then he was not to complete the deliverance; he was only to *begin* it; for the yoke of the Philistines was not fully shaken off the neck of Israel till the time of David. Thus 'God carries on his work gradually, and by several hands. One lays the foundation of a good work, another builds, and perhaps a third brings forth the top-stone.' *Henry.* Christ on the other hand, the great counter-

6 ¶ Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, [i]A man of God came unto me, and his [k]countenance *was* like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I [l]asked him not whence he *was*, neither told he me his name:

7 But he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean *thing:* for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death.

8 ¶ Then Manoah entreated the Lord, and said, O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born.

[i] Deut. 33. 1. 1 Sam. 2. 27, and 9. 6. 1 Kings 17. 24. [k] Matt. 28. 3. Luke 9. 29. Acts 6. 15. [l] ver. 17, 18.

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part of Samson, both begins and perfects his people's salvation; he is at once the Author and Finisher of faith.

6. *A man of God.* So called because he appeared in human form, leading her to suppose him merely a prophet sent from God. So afterwards v. 8, 10, 11. She seems, however, to have had a strong suspicion that he was something more than human. ——¶ *Very terrible.* Rather, perhaps, venerable, awful, full of majesty; such as at once to inspire the deepest respect and reverence; so that according to every idea she could form on the subject, his countenance very much resembled that of an angel.

8. *Let the man of God—come again unto us, and teach us*, &c. Josephus represents the second appearance of the angel as essential to Manoah's peace of mind, as his excessive attachment to his wife made him jealous of her conversation with a stranger. But the narrative contains nothing to warrant such an insinuation. On the other hand, his request appears to have been prompted by a strong faith and a high esteem of the promised blessing, and a sincere desire to receive farther intimations of duty. He may have thought it possible, too, that his wife's joy for the promise should have made her forget some part of the charge which the angel connected with it. On this point he would be fully informed; he dreads the possibility of a mistake. 'When I see the strength of Manoah's faith, I marvel not that he had a Samson to his son; he saw not the messenger, he heard not the errand, he examined not the circumstances; yet now he takes thought, not whether he should have a son, but how he shall order the son which he must have. Zecharias had the same message, and craving a sign lost the voice wherewith he craved it: Manoah seeks no sign for the promise, but counsel for himself. Happy are they that have not seen, yet believed: true faith takes all for granted, yea, for performed, that is promised.' *Bp. Hall.* The petition of Manoah reminds us also that the care of children is a great concern, and that those who have the parental relation in prospect can make no more suitable prayer at the throne of grace than that of the pious Danite on this occasion. Who upon the eve of becoming parents have not need to say, as said Manoah, 'Teach us what

9 And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field: but Manoah her husband *was* not with her.

10 And the woman made haste, and ran, and showed her husband, and said unto him, Behold, the man hath appeared unto me, that came unto me the *other* day.

11 And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man, and said unto him, *Art* thou the man that spakest unto the woman? And he said, I *am*.

12 And Manoah said, Now let thy words come to pass. How shall we order the child, and *how* shall we do unto him?

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we shall do to the child that shall be born.'

9. *And God hearkened—and the angel of God came again.* The phraseology here is worthy of notice. The sacred writer does not say, 'And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah, and *sent* his angel,' but 'God hearkened to the voice of Manoah, and the angel of God *came* again,' implying that it was the God who hearkened to the voice of his servant that came in the person of his Son. He perhaps appeared to Manoah's wife a second time rather than to Manoah himself, because she was more especially interested both in the blessing and the charge than he was. He may also have had other reasons unknown to us. The divine condescension in granting a repetition of the visit is too striking to be overlooked. How clearly does it prove that nothing is more acceptable to God, than a sincere desire to know our duty, and that sooner than our prayers to that effect shall go unanswered, a heavenly messenger shall be sent for our instruction. But thanks be to God, with the Bible and the Holy Spirit for our guides we have no need of angelic instructions to direct us what to do.

10. *And the woman made haste and ran,* &c. Doubtless after humbly entreating the messenger to stay, and obtaining his consent. Those who have met with a refreshing visit from God cannot but instinctively exclaim, 'Return, O God of hosts, return;' and when the favor is granted, how ardently do they long that those who are near and dear to them may also share in the comfort and sweetness of their divine communion. What is the fellowship of husbands and wives if it extend not to a mutual communication of each other's religious experience, of their hopes and fears, joys and sorrows?

12. *Let thy words come to pass.* This clause, as it reads in our translation, is simply the expression of an earnest wish, that the promise graciously made to his wife may be fulfilled. It is a kind of pious amen to the angel's previous announcement; and this was probably his real feeling; but the Heb. may properly be rendered, 'and now thy words shall come to pass,' intimating his most implicit confidence in the promise. 'Lord, I lay hold upon what thou hast said, and depend upon it with the most unwavering assurance.'——¶ *How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?* Heb. 'what shall be the rule, prescription, institution, (משפט *mishpot*,) in regard to the child, and what our doing (מעשהו

13 And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Of all that I said unto the woman, let her beware.

14 She may not eat of any *thing* that cometh of the vine, [m] neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean *thing*: all that I commanded her let her observe.

15 ¶ And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, I pray thee, [n] let us detain thee, until we shall have made ready a kid for thee.

16 And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Though thou detain me, I will not eat of thy bread: and if thou wilt offer a burnt-offering, thou must offer it

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[m] ver. 4.

[n] Gen. 18. 5. ch. 6. 18.

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*maasëhu*,) towards him?' That is, what shall be his training? how shall we educate him? The former term, which is usually translated *judgment* or *ordinance*, seems to imply the *divine disposition* or *purpose* in regard to the child, and the latter the proper mode of *executing* or *accomplishing* it on their part. Though the literal rendering of מעשהו is *his work*, or *doing*, yet the import is obviously *what is done to* or *towards him*, just as in Gen. 50. 4, the phrase, 'days of his mourning,' means the *days of mourning for him*. So also Job 41. 9. 'The hope of him (the leviathan) is vain,' i. e. the hope of taking him.

13. *And the angel of the Lord said*, &c. It might seem at first view that the angel's answer was not pertinent to the question. Manoah inquired what conduct they should observe in regard to the *child*; the angel in his reply merely reiterates the charge he had before given in respect to the *mother*. In explanation we may remark, that the child to be born was to be a Nazarite, set apart and consecrated to God. Until the period of his birth, therefore, and while at the breast, she was, *for his sake*, to abstain from all the things inhibited above. But if it was solely for the child's sake that these commands were laid upon her, the inference would be very fair, that *he* also was to be taught to govern himself by the same rules, and it was the duty of his parents to see that this was the case. In fact it was this that constituted the very essence of his Nazarite state. The directions, therefore, relative to the child were really involved in those that had respect to the mother, and it would require no far-fetched construction so to understand them. The divine injunctions are not always given in the most *direct* form, but to a heart rightly disposed, they are always intelligible.

15. *Until we shall have made ready a kid for thee.* Heb. לפניך *lepânëka*, *before thee*. Not yet aware of the true character of his visitor, Manoah proposed this as an act of hospitality.

16. *I will not eat of thy bread.* As the proffer of Manoah was to serve up for the angel a dish of kid's flesh, the term 'bread' here must be taken with some latitude to signify food in general; a sense which it evidently bears, 2 Kings 6. 22, 23; Matt. 6. 11. ——¶ *And if thou wilt offer a burnt-offering.* Rather, '*but* if thou wilt offer,' &c. To us this part of the angel's answer seems to be made, not so much to what Manoah actually said, as to what he was inwardly re-

unto the LORD. For Manoah knew not that he *was* an angel of the LORD.

17 And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, What *is* thy name, that when thy sayings

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volving in his own mind. If we mistake not, he had by this time begun to entertain suspicions that the personage with whom he was conversing was truly divine; and if so, he could not but be aware that a sacrificial offering was a more suitable expression of the sentiments with which he ought to regard him, than a common meal; and as the tradition of Gideon's offering under similar circumstances at a former period, and the manner of his reception, had doubtless come down to him, he appears to have been at this time wavering in his own mind, like his renowned predecessor, as to what should be the real character of the offering that he now proposed to make. The angel perceiving this, answers him accordingly. He does not forbid him to present a burnt-offering, but he would have him do it intelligently; he would have him assured as to the true character of the object of his worship. In saying, 'If thou wilt offer a burnt-offering, thou must offer it unto the Lord,' he does not deny that he was himself Jehovah, or intimate that he would decline the honor which Manoah intended, any more than our Saviour would intimate that he was not good, when, being addressed by the title 'good master,' he replied, 'there is none good but God.' In both cases his answer has reference to the *state of mind* of the speaker, or to *the light in which they regarded him.* Here he merely intended to say, that though he might offer him a common meal as a man, yet it would not do to offer him a sacrifice as such, or while he was not in possession of *full evidence* that the being he thus proposed to honor was indeed divine. This evidence he had not yet gained, and therefore it is immediately added, 'For Manoah knew not (had not a clear conviction) that it was an angel (rather, *the* angel) of the Lord;' i. e. the Angel-Jehovah; but he was soon to be assured that he was. The whole address of the angel appears to be framed with reference to the manifestation which he was just about to make.

17. *What is thy name?* Heb. מי שמך *mi shemĕkâ, who is thy name? Name*, in reference to the Supreme Being, is in Scripture style very much the same as *nature;* and we suppose this to be the real drift of Manoah's question, to learn the nature, the essential character of the mysterious being whom he addressed; for that he regarded him as a superhuman personage cannot, we think, be doubted from an attentive examination of the passage. At any rate, the answer of the angel, as we shall see, was adapted to such a scope in Manoah's interrogation. That he was prompted by somewhat of an unhallowed curiosity in making the inquiry is indeed supposed by many commentators, but we see nothing in the text to warrant it. On the other hand, we know no reason to doubt that he was really actuated by the motive assigned, a disposition to render him due honor and thanks when the promise should be fulfilled.

18. *Why askest thou thus after my*

come to pass, we may do thee honor?

18 And the angel of the Lord said unto him, [o]Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it *is* secret?

[o] Gen. 32. 29.

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*name, seeing it is secret?* This has at first blush the air of a rebuke for putting such a question; but comparing it with what follows we imagine it is such in appearance only. A rebuke supposes something criminal or censurable in him who is the subject of it. But what offence could attach to a respectful and reverential question of this kind? Why was the mere *secresy* of the name a reason for its not being asked? Was it not in fact for this very reason that he *did* ask it? We admit, indeed, that if Manoah had been *previously* informed that the name was *ineffable*—that it was designed to be kept a profound secret—he would have been guilty of high presumption in demanding it. But we see no evidence of this in any part of the sacred text, and conclude therefore that the angel made use of this interrogative form of speech merely in order to introduce in the most suitable and impressive manner the declaration that follows, constituting the real *point* of his reply. 'It is secret;'—or rather as in the margin, 'It is wonderful,' for so the original (פלאר *peli*,) properly implies, and so it is expressly rendered, Is. 9. 6, 'His name shall be called *Wonderful* (פלא *pelë*); i. e. his nature, his character, shall *be* wonderful; properly implying that kind of wonder which is the natural effect of *miracles*, of *marvellous and superhuman works*. In *apparently* declining, therefore, to reveal his name, he does in fact make known one of his most august and glorious titles, one which went far towards conveying an idea of the divine attributes of his nature, and one which was therefore eminently appropriate to the drift of Manoah's question. The implication probably is, 'You have scarcely any real occasion to inquire as to my name (nature); it is obvious from the words, promises, and actions already witnessed and yet further to be displayed, that *I am*, and am therefore *to be called Peli, the Admirable One, the great Worker of wonders, the Master of miracles.*' The original פלאר has the *form* of a proper name, but the *force* of an appellative. Whether he fully understood its entire import, is perhaps to be doubted; but whether he did or not, the declaration is to us, considered in one point of view, immensely important; for by assuming a title which unquestionably belongs to the promised Messiah, he identifies himself with that divine personage, and consequently puts it beyond a doubt who it is that is meant by the term 'Angel,' or 'Angel of the Lord,' so frequently occurring in the Old Testament Scriptures, in connection with miraculous appearances and revelations. It is plain that it is no other than the Angel-Jehovah, so emphatically alluded to in Ex. 23. 20, 21, 'Behold I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions; for *my name* is in

19 So Manoah took a kid, with a meat-offering, [p] and offered *it* upon a rock unto the LORD; and *the angel* did wondrously, and Manoah and his wife looked on.

20 For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar, and Manoah and his wife looked on *it*, and [q] fell on their faces to the ground.

21 But the angel of the LORD did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife. [r] Then Manoah knew that he *was* an angel of the LORD.

22 And Manoah said unto his wife, [s] We shall surely die, because we have seen God.

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[p] ch. 6. 19, 20.

[q] Lev. 9. 24. 1 Chron. 21. 16. Ezek. 1. 28. Matt. 17. 6. [r] ch. 6. 22. [s] Gen. 32. 30. Ex. 33. 20. Deut. 5. 26. ch. 6. 22.

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him;' i. e. my nature is in him; he possesses true and essential divinity. The exalted character, therefore, which he claimed by the assumption of this title, he proceeded to display still more fully in the incident that followed.

19. *Manoah took a kid—and offered it*, &c. He had by this time become so far satisfied as to the real character of his guest, that he no longer doubted in what manner to express his grateful and reverential feelings towards him. He determines to do this by offering the kid as a holocaust accompanied with the usual meal or flour-offering, (erroneously rendered 'meat-offering,') which the law prescribed. For this purpose he selects a rock, as did Gideon upon a like occasion, ch. 6. 20. 21, instead of an altar. Large masses of stone, of various forms, some of which are well adapted to such a use, frequently occur in the plains and valleys of Judea, and other hilly countries. Some of these are seen in their natural position, rising out of the ground, while others appear as detached fragments, thrown down from the rocky eminences. To such insulated masses of rock there are repeated references in the Scriptures.——¶ *And* the angel *did wondrously.* Heb. מפליא *maphlia;* in correspondence with the name which he had before attributed to himself. Being *wonderful*, he performed wonderful things; probably causing fire to arise out of the rock, and consume the sacrifice; and we are expressly told that he afterwards ascended in the flame. The word 'angel,' it is true, does not occur in the original, but from the tenor of the narrative there can be no doubt who is intended.

21. *Then Manoah knew that he was an angel of the Lord.* Rather, 'that he was *the* angel;' the divine uncreated angel; the Angel-Jehovah. He was now fully and undoubtingly assured. This put the finishing stroke to the process of conviction which from the commencement of the interview had been going on in Manoah's mind.

22. *We shall surely die, because we have seen God.* Perceiving that the personage who had now appeared to him was no other than God in human shape, he conceived, according to popular belief, that both he and his wife must die. This idea was not without some foundation; for when Moses had entreated the Lord to show him his glory, he answered,

23 But his wife said unto him, If the LORD were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands, neither would he have showed us all these *things*, nor would as at this time have told us *such things* as these.

24 ¶ And the woman bare a son, and called his name [t] Samson. And [u] the child grew, and the LORD blessed him.

[t] Heb. 11. 32. [u] 1 Sam. 3. 19. Luke 1. 80, and 2. 52.

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'Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live;' and for this very reason God put him into a cleft of a rock, and permitted him to see, as it were, only 'his back parts,' a very *partial* display of his glory. So when Jacob had been favored with a visit from the same divine person in the shape of an angel, he expressed his astonishment, that 'his life was preserved,' Gen. 32. 29, 30. From these passages we may learn the grounds of the prevailing impressions on the subject. But while we do not wonder at the apprehensions of Manoah, we the more admire the composure of his wife. She argued in a directly different way. She considered the mercies already vouchsafed to them as tokens for good; for why should God confer such singular honor upon them, if he intended to kill them? Why did he accept the burnt-offering at their hands? Why stoop to impart to them such information? Why give them such gracious promises? Was all this done to mock them? Indeed, if he should kill them, how could the promises be fulfilled? or for what purpose were they given? The honor of the divine veracity therefore required that they should be preserved. This was a just mode of arguing; for such mercies were both evidences and pledges of his love; and therefore were rather to be considered as earnests of future blessings, than as harbingers of ill. The woman in this showed herself not only the strongest believer, but the wisest reasoner. The incidents related may teach us, (1) That in times of dark and discouraging providences or sore temptations we should remember the past experience of God's goodness as a ground of present support. 'Account the long suffering of God to be salvation.' He that hath so kindly helped us and dealt with us hitherto, means not to destroy us at last. (2) That the sinner oppressed with a sense of his deserts has no reason to despair. Let him remember what Christ has done for him by his bloody sacrifice, and read in it a sure proof, that he does not design his death.

23. *Nor would as at this time*, &c. Or, Heb. 'at this time.' The expression is perhaps designed to be emphatical, implying that God's mercy was greatly enhanced by being afforded to them at this particular time, a time of general calamity, when the word of the Lord was precious, and there was no open vision. 1 Sam. 3. 1.

24. *Called his name Samson.* Heb. שמשון *Shimshon.* The root is undoubtedly שמש *shemesh, the sun*, but what relation the name was intended to bear to this object, we are no where informed. Schmid conjectures that it was in allusion to the *shining countenance* of the angel

25 [x] And the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan, [y] between Zorah and Eshtaol.

## CHAPTER XIV.

AND Samson went down [a] to Timnath, and [b] saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines.

2 And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore [c] get her for me to wife.

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[x] ch. 3. 10. 1 Sam. 11. 6. Matt. 4. 1. [y] Josh. 15. 33. ch. 18. 11.

[a] Gen. 38. 13. Josh. 15. 10. [b] Gen. 34. 2. [c] Gen. 21. 21, and 34. 4.

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when he first appeared to Manoah's wife. Perhaps, or a still more probable supposition is, that it was in memory of the resplendent brightness in which his whole person may for a moment have been arrayed just as he departed from their sight.——¶ *And the Lord blessed him.* Gave evident proofs that the child was under his peculiar protection; blessed him by qualifying him both in body and mind for something great and extraordinary.

25. *The Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times.* To stir him up to bold exploits; inspiring him, in view of the degrading bondage of his countrymen, with an ardent zeal to do something towards their deliverance. Under this supernatural impulse he was led from time to time to put forth astonishing specimens of valor and strength, such perhaps as his slaying the lion, ch. 14. 6; achievements which clearly evinced his designation of heaven for the work to which he was called and set apart. The import of the original (לפעם *lepaamo*) for 'moved,' is peculiar. As פעם *paam*, the radical form, signifies *an anvil*, the metaphor is probably drawn from the *repeated* and somewhat violent *strokes* of the workman with his hammer. It implies therefore a peculiar *urgency*, an *impelling influence* on the part of the Spirit, which made its subject invincible.

### CHAPTER XIV.

1. *Samson went down to Timnath.* A frontier town of Dan, lying close upon the borders of the Philistines' country. It originally belonged to Judah, but was afterwards assigned to Dan. It was situated about twenty miles west of Jerusalem, and about twelve north-east of Eshtaol. There evidently had been some remissness on the part of Israel in driving out the Philistines from this place, but as the latter had now the upper hand, it is not surprising that they dwelt in the cities of the former, whom they had probably put under tribute, and although the two races were in an attitude of hostility towards each other, yet it seems not at this time to have interrupted all intercourse between them. Indeed the terms on which the Israelites lived and mingled with their devoted neighbors the Canaanites, as is evident from many parts of their history, were such as we should scarcely have expected from people so related. But 'the holy seed' in all ages has been too prone to cultivate intimacies and form alliances with the world of the ungodly.

3 Then his father and his mother said unto him, *Is there* never a woman among the daughters of [d] thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the [e] uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father,

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[d] Gen. 24. 3, 4.

[e] Gen. 34. 14. Ex. 34. 16. Deut. 7. 3.

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2. *Get her for me to wife.* That is, take measures for that purpose; endeavor to bring it about. No part of the Scripture has afforded more occasion for the doubts of sceptics, or the scoffs of infidels, than the history of Samson. His character is indeed dark, and almost inexplicable. By none of the judges of Israel did God work so many miracles, and yet by none were so many faults committed. He is enrolled by Paul in the list of ancient worthies, in the eleventh of Hebrews, which affords a strong presumption, though not, we conceive, a positive proof, of his being a truly pious man. It must be recollected, however, that his history is very short, and that the peculiarity of the dispensation under which he lived, may account for many things, which, if done at this time and without the special appointment of Heaven, would be highly criminal. Besides, there may have been in him many exercises of true piety, which, if recorded, would have reflected a different light upon his character. In the present instance, it must be admitted that his conduct in suffering his affections to be ensnared by a Philistine woman, had an ill appearance. Marriage connexions with the Philistines, who were not of the devoted nations, were not indeed prohibited to the Israelites by the *letter* of the law, though by its *spirit* they undoubtedly were. The danger of being enticed to idolatry was the reason of the law as it respected alliances with the Canaanites, and this reason we cannot but suppose was equally applicable to connexions with the Philistines. Still the law was merely ceremonial, and if God saw fit to dispense with it in regard to any of his servants, he could do so unimpeached. That this was the case in the present instance, there are strong grounds from the actual event to believe. At least, we do not feel at liberty, from a view of the facts recorded, to pronounce positively a sentence of condemnation on this part of Samson's conduct. But whatever judgment we may form of the measure on the whole, his mode of procedure was in one respect highly deserving of commendation. He took no step towards forming the connexion, not even so much as paying his addresses to her, without first making his parents acquainted with the matter, and obtaining their consent. In his example we read an admonition that addresses itself to all children in similar circumstances. Next to the sanction of heaven, the concurrence of parents is requisite to render that relation a source of comfort and happiness to the parties concerned. Consulting them is consulting our own welfare, as well as acting up to the spirit of the divine injunction in the fifth commandment.

3. *Is there never a woman*, &c. His parents, aware of the divine prohibitions relative to foreign alliances, and also of the high and solemn designation of their son, of course re-

Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well.

4 But his father and his mother knew not that it *was* [f] of the

monstrate with him and endeavor to dissuade him from what they conceived so imprudent and unbecoming a connexion. They inquire whether among the daughters of his 'brethren,' i. e. of the tribe of Dan, he could not find a more suitable object of choice. If not, there was the whole nation of Israel—'all my people,'—that afforded him a field of selection. Why then should he have occasion to go to the daughters of a heathen race? 'I wish,' says an old divine, 'that Manoah and his wife could speak so loud that all *our* Israel could hear them.' By nothing is the heart of a pious parent more grieved than by the prospect of the unequal yoking of his children with profane or irreligious partners; for he knows that nothing is so likely to prove injurious to their spiritual interests, and subject them to heart-rending trials.——¶ *For she pleaseth me well.* Heb. היא ישרה בעיני *hi yasherâh beënai, she is right in mine eyes.* Taking these words in connexion with what is said in the next verse, we very much doubt whether our present translation does full justice to Samson's motives. According to this, he urges no stronger reason for the step proposed than that the woman pleased his fancy, and for aught that appears from the rendering it was on this ground alone that his parents acceded to his request. But if they conceived the measure to be directly contrary to the precepts of the law, how could they, as true believers and obedient servants of God, yield their consent and co-operation, merely to gratify the headstrong passion of their son, unless they had some intimation that God himself had authorized in this instance a departure from his established ordinance? Should we look for such a concession to human infirmity from the pious pair who had so devoutly entertained a messenger from heaven, and listened to his commands? The fact is, if we mistake not, Samson does not intend mainly to say in these words, 'she is well-pleasing in my sight,' for the original word is not an adjective, having the sense of *beautiful*, *engaging*, *attractive*, but a verb conveying indeed the idea of *right*, but of *right relative to an end*, *purpose*, or *object;* in other words, of *fitness* or *adaptation.* See Gussetius on the root ישר *yâshar*, and compare the use of it, 2 Sam. 17. 4; 1 Kings 9. 12; 2 Chron. 30; Num. 23. 27. This then we conceive affords the true clue to Samson's meaning; 'She is *right* in my eyes;' i. e. *adapted* to the end which I have in view; she may be *used*, she is *available* for a purpose entirely ulterior to the immediate connexion which I propose. That Samson, however, entertained a genuine affection for the woman, and was not influenced *solely* by views of policy in the transaction, we see no reason to doubt. But that he intended at the same time to make this alliance subservient to the great purpose of delivering his country from oppression, there are very strong grounds for believing.

4. *But his father and his mother knew not*, &c. These words appear

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[f] Josh. 11. 20. 1 Kings 12. 15. 2 Kings 6. 33. 2 Chron. 10. 15, and 22. 7, and 25. 20.

LORD, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time [g] the Philistines had dominion over Israel.

[g] ch. 13. 1. Deut. 28. 48.

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to be inserted parenthetically for the purpose of intimating the reason to which it was owing, that Samson's parents declined giving their consent to the proposed marriage. They did not know God's purposes in respect to it. Had they known them, the implication is that their decision would have been different; and as we learn from the next verse that their objections were overruled, and that they went with their son to Timnath in reference to the object of his suit, the inference is fair, that in some way they *did* become acquainted with the divine counsels. Their going is to be considered, we think, rather in the light of an acquiescence in the will of heaven, than of a yielding to the mere importunities of their son. In what particular manner they became enlightened in respect to the ultimate bearings of the measure, we are not informed, and must of course be left to mere conjecture. To us it appears most probable that Samson frankly laid open to them all his mind, and that in these disclosures they saw satisfactory evidence that he was moved by the Spirit of God in this transaction in a way that they did not dare to resist.——¶ *That he sought an occasion against the Philistines.* That is, an occasion of avenging the wrongs inflicted by the Philistines on the Israelites. It is worthy of note that the Hebrew, instead of 'against the Philistines,' has, 'of or from the Philistines;' clearly implying that the occasion sought should be one that *originated* on the side of the Philistines. The sense exhibited by our common rendering is not indeed essentially different from this, but we prefer to express the exact shade of the original wherever it can be done. As far as the grammatical construction is concerned, there is nothing to prevent this being understood of the Lord himself as the proper subject of the verb. But it seems on the whole more natural and plausible to understand it of Samson—that *he* sought occasion against the Philistines—though at the same time with the connivance and under the prompting of the Most High, who saw fit in this indirect way to bring about the accomplishment of his designs of retribution towards his enemies. If it be asked *why* infinite wisdom chose to adopt this peculiar method of compassing the object, although our inability to answer the question would not at all affect the claims of the sacred narrative, yet it may be suggested, that the reason is perhaps to be drawn from the special design of God in raising up Samson as a deliverer. His leading purpose in this seems to have been to *baffle the power of the whole Philistine nation by the prowess of a single individual.* The champion of Israel therefore was not appointed so much to be the leader of an army like the other judges, as to be *an army in himself.* In order then that the contest might be carried on in this way, it was necessary that the entire opposition of the Philistines should be *concentrated, as far as possible, against the person of Samson.* This would array the contending parties precisely in such an attitude as to illustrate most signally the power of God in the overthrow of his enemies. But how could this result be brought about except by means of some *private quarrel* between Samson and the enemy with which he was to contend? and who can say that the scheme now projected was not the very best that could have been devised for accomplishing the end which God had in view? To what extent Samson foresaw all the events that were to grow out of this transaction, or how far he had a plan *distinctly laid* corresponding with the results that actually ensued, it is difficult to determine. The probability, we think, is that he had rather a *general strong impression*, wrought by the Spirit of God, than a *definite conception*, of the train of events that were to transpire. It was, however, a conviction as to the issue sufficiently powerful to warrant both him and his parents in going forward with the measure. They were in some way assured that they were engaged in a proceeding which God would *overrule* to the furtherance of his designs of mercy to his people and of judgment to their oppressors. God foresaw, though they did not, how basely and perfidiously his wife's friends and relations would act towards Samson, and what just grounds of war would on this account arise. In all this, however, they would act freely and without compulsion, so that there would be no injustice in their punishment; and what should prevent the righteous Lord God from availing himself of his omniscience in working out to his enemies the due recompense of their deeds?——¶*For at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.* Added in order to intimate the *general moving cause* which prompted Samson to exert himself in behalf of his people. They were suffering under the despotic and tyrannical sway of their oppressors. It was in this fact that a justification was to be sought for the commencement of hostilities. Schmid, however, expresses the belief that a still deeper sense is couched under these words, viz. that they are intended to assign a reason why Samson should have felt it necessary *to seek any occasion at all* for entering upon warlike operations. His curious conceit on the subject is as follows; —The Philistines, although they were now cruelly oppressing the Israelites, yet *by the acknowledged rights of war*, they had justly acquired this dominion over them, and such is God's abhorrence of all rebellions and insurrections against existing powers, that they were not at liberty, on the simple plea or pretence of tyranny, to endeavor to shake off the yoke. Consequently some just occasion was to be sought as a warrant for the attempt, and unless such a plausible pretext should arise, our commentator would have us understand that the bare *fact* of the Philistines' having the ascendency over Israel was a sufficient reason for their abstaining from all efforts to regain their liberties. This he supposes to be the genuine drift of the illative 'for' in the clause before us. Samson sought an occasion against the Philistines, '*for* (because) at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel,' and therefore it would be unlawful to rise against them *without* such an occasion! In connexion with this exposition he quotes with applause the remarks of Brent, 5 ¶ Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and behold, a young lion roared against him.

6 And [b]the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and *he had* nothing in his

[b] ch. 3.10, and 13.25. 1 Sam. 11.6.

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commending the singular prudence and moderation of Samson, that although he had ample grounds in the divine commission implied in the very fact of his being raised up and set apart as a national deliverer, yet to avoid offence, he will not undertake the work till a just and legitimate cause of war occurs. All this reasoning, savoring as it does so strongly of the doctrine of *passive obedience*, we leave to the reader to estimate according to its worth; but we believe a much more correct view of the reason of Samson's 'seeking an occasion against the Philistines is given in a preceding note. If a *general movement* had been made by the Israelites for the assertion of their liberties, an equally *general* attempt to crush it would of course have been made on the other side. But God designed that Samson *personally* should be the butt of the enemies' wrath and machinations, that he might display his own glory in conquering them by the might of a single arm.

5. *Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother.* Having changed their minds; having yielded to the evidence that he was under a divine prompting in the measure proposed.——¶ *Behold a young lion roared against him.* Heb. הנה כפיר אריות שאג לקראתו *hinnēh kephir arâyoth shoēg likrâtho, behold, a young lion of the lionesses roaring in his meeting.* From v. 6 it is obvious that his parents were not with him when this remarkable incident occurred. 'He was all alone in the vineyards, whither he had rambled from his father and mother (who kept the high road) probably to eat grapes. Children consider not that they expose themselves to the roaring lion that seeks to devour, when, out of a foolish fondness for liberty, they wander from under the eye of their prudent, pious parents. Nor do young people consider what lions lurk in the vineyards, the vineyards of red wine, as dangerous as snakes under the green grass.' *Henry.* It is to be observed, that 'young lion' does not here mean a whelp, for which the Hebrew has quite a different word, but a young lion arrived at its full strength and size, when it is far more fierce than at a later period. It is evident from this and other passages of Scripture, that lions formerly existed in Judea. We do not know that they are now to be met with in that country; but this is not surprising, as numerous instances might be cited of the disappearance of wild animals, in the course of time, from countries where they were once well known.

6. *The Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him.* Well rendered from the original, which is in numerous instances employed to signify a supernatural influence raising the bodily or mental powers to an unwonted pitch of energy, clothing one with courage, fortitude, skill,

hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done.

7 And he went down, and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well.

8 ¶ And after a time he return-

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wisdom, and strength, and enabling him to perform achievements to which his unassisted powers would be entirely unequal. The expression seems to denote an *occasional illapse* of this kind of influence, and it may be doubted whether even Samson was able *ordinarily* to display these prodigies of valor and prowess which he from time to time put forth, though perhaps habitually a stronger man than others——¶ *Told not his father or his mother.* An instance of singular discretion, modesty, and self-control, view it in whatever light we may. How few people are there in the world, who, if they had performed such an exploit as this, would have suffered it to remain hid from their dearest friends. But the presumption is, that before this Samson himself was not *fully* aware of the extent to which 'the power of the Highest rested on him,' and without a distinct foresight of the events that followed, he may still have concluded that to divulge the possession of such astonishing strength would be likely to defeat the ends to which it might be applied. He would not therefore betray so important a secret,—not even to his own parents, lest a premature disclosure, by putting his enemies on their guard, should render the endowment comparatively useless.

7. *And talked with the woman.* Rather according to the Heb. ידבר לאשה *yedabbër lâishâh, talked concerning the woman.* Marriages in the East, from the earliest periods, have always been arranged by parents in behalf of their children. It was doubtless so in the present case. Indeed, for what other purpose did his parents go down? According to the letter, indeed, the talking is referred to Samson, and he undoubtedly had a voice in it, but not, we imagine, to the exclusion of his father and mother. The whole three negotiated the matter with the parents of the young woman.

8. *After a time he returned to take her.* An interval of some time, usually ten or twelve months, elapsed between the ceremony of espousals and the marriage. During this time the betrothed bride remained with her parents, that she might provide herself with nuptial ornaments suitable to her station; after which the bridegroom came to fetch her home and take her fully as his wife. The Jews still keep up this custom; the parties being betrothed at least six or twelve months before marriage. During this interval, oriental usage appears to have allowed to the parties but slight communication with each other. Yet what little intercourse they had at all previous to marriage, seems to have been restricted to this term. For, 'in point of fact, we apprehend,' says the editor of the Pictorial Bible, 'that the betrothal was considered necessary to enable a young man to pay to a woman even that limited degree of particular attention which eastern manners allowed.' This suggestion still further confirms the idea advanced above respecting the 'talking' there alluded to. It is quite improbable

ed to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion: and behold, *there was* a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion.

9 And he took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat: but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion.

10 ¶ So his father went down unto the woman: and Samson

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that it should have taken place between Samson and the young woman herself. The kind of intimacy expressed by the word 'courtship,' and so familiar to European manners, appears to have been from remote antiquity entirely unknown in the East.——¶ *Turned aside to see the carcass of the lion.* Heb. מפלת *mappeleth*, *the ruins*, *the fallen heap.* 'Whilst Samson concealed the event from others, he pondered it in himself; and when he returned to Timnath, went out of the way to see his dead adversary, and could not but recall to himself his danger and deliverance; "Here the beast met me; thus he fought; thus I slew him!" The very dead lion taught Samson thankfulness. The mercies of God are ill bestowed upon us, if we cannot step aside to view the monuments of his deliverances. As Samson had not found his honey-comb, if he had not turned aside to see his lion, so we shall lose the comfort of God's benefits, if we do not renew our perils by meditation.' *Bp. Hall.*——¶ *A swarm of bees and honey in the carcass.* In one respect the preceding note is strikingly confirmed by the present text. It is evident that several months must have elapsed between the first and second visit to Timnath, in order to allow time for the carcass of the lion to become reduced to a dry naked skeleton. The cleanly habits of bees, and their repugnance to impure smells, would not otherwise have permitted them to select it as a habitation. The beautiful episode in the fourth Georgic of Virgil, proves that the ancients believed that bees might be engendered in the dead body of an ox.

9. *And he took thereof in his hands.* Heb. ירדהו *yirdĕhu*, *from* רדה *râdâh*, *to subdue*, a very peculiar term to be applied to the act of 'taking' a quantity of honey from its place of deposit, be that what it might. The most common Hebrew word for 'take,' is לקח, *lâka'h* and if nothing more is meant in the present case than the simple act so denominated, why is not the usual term employed? We adopt the suggestion of Schmid in reply, that a word was purposely chosen which should imply some resistance and difficulty in getting possession of the prize; that it was not without an *encounter*, and a species of *subjugation*, that he succeeded in wresting the honey from the bees; such at any rate is the import of the word, whatever be the reason of its use.

10. *His father went down unto the woman.* Rendered by the Chaldaic, 'went down relative to the affair of the woman;' a sense of the words decidedly approved by the Jewish critic David Kimchi. From the connexion it appears moreover, quite evident that Samson's father here is not to be understood *exclusive* of Samson himself. The probability is, that

made there a feast; for so used the young men to do.

11 And it came to pass, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him.

12 ¶ And Samson said unto them, I will now [i] put forth a riddle unto you: if ye can certainly declare it me [k] within the

both his father and mother and a company of friends attended him on the occasion, but the father alone, as the natural head of the party, is mentioned. Compare with this the Note on v. 7.——¶ *And Samson made there a feast.* A wedding feast, such as is customary all over the East, as well as in most other countries, during which every species of merriment prevails. This nuptial festivity used to continue seven days, as we see from v. 12 compared with Gen. 29. 27. After this the bride was brought home by, or to her husband. We must understand probably, in conformity with existing usages in the East, that Samson made his feast at the house of some acquaintance, or in one hired for the occasion, as his own house was distant; while at the same time the woman entertained her female friends and relatives at her father's house. The different sexes never feasted together on these or any other occasions, and the bride and bridegroom did not even give their respective entertainments in the same house, unless under very peculiar circumstances. In reading this narrative we must not forget that Samson was a mere sojourner at Timnath.——¶ *So used the young men to do.* 'I do not hear Samson plead his Nazaritism for a color of singularity; it is both lawful and fit, in things not prohibited, to conform ourselves to the manners and rites of those with whom we live. God never misliked moderate solemnities (festivities) in the severest life.' *Bp. Hall.*

11. *It came to pass when they saw him.* That is, when they (the citizens) *observed* or *considered* him, when they *noted* his stature, form, countenance and bearing.——¶ *They brought thirty companions to be with him.* A class of persons called elsewhere in the Scriptures 'friends of the bridegroom,' or, 'children of the bride-chamber,' Mat. 9. 15; John 3. 29. Although these companions were brought to him with a *show* of paying him respect and honor in conformity to custom, yet it was undoubtedly with the secret purpose of stationing spies about his person. A remarkable something in his external appearance told them that he was a man to be watched; and jealous as they now were of him, they would have been still more so, had they known of his exploit in killing the lion, which he had industriously kept from them. 'The favors of Philistines have often some mischief or other designed in them.' *Henry.*

12. *I will now put forth a riddle unto you.* It was a very ancient custom among different nations to relieve their entertainments by proposing difficult and obscure questions, to the solution of which a reward was usually annexed, while a proportionate forfeiture was the consequence of a failure. They were particularly common among the Greeks,

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[i] 1 Kings 10. 1. Ezek. 17. 2. Luke 14. 2. [k] Gen. 29. 27.

seven days of the feast, and find *it* out, then I will give you thirty sheets and thirty [1]change of garments:

13 But if ye cannot declare *it* me, then shall ye give me thirty sheets and thirty change of garments. And they said unto him, Put forth thy riddle, that we may hear it.

14 And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. And they could not in three days expound the riddle.

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[1] Gen. 45. 22. 2 Kings 5. 22.

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who were accustomed to call riddles contrived to puzzle and perplex by, the name of 'banquet-riddles,' or 'cup-questions.' Devices of this sort were especially necessary for amusement and pastime in a festival of seven days' continuance like the present.——¶ *Thirty sheets and thirty change of garments.* The original word סדינים *sedinim*, from which comes the Greek Σινδων, *Sindon*, *fine linen*, probably denotes a kind of body linen, more like our *shirts* than *sheets*. 'It cannot easily be imagined they were what we call sheets, for Samson might have slain thirty Philistines near Askelon, and not have found one sheet; or if he slew them who were carrying their beds with them on their travels, as they often do in present times, the slaughter of fifteen had been sufficient, for in the East, as in other countries, every bed is provided with two sheets; but he slew just thirty, in order to obtain thirty sedinim, or shirts. If this meaning of the term be admitted, the deed of Samson must have been very provoking to the Philistines; for since only people of more easy circumstances wore shirts, they were not thirty of the common people that he slew, but thirty persons of figure and consequence. The same word is used by the prophet Isaiah, in his description of the splendid and costly dress in which people of rank and fashion then delighted, rendered in our translation fine linen; which seems to place it beyond a doubt that they were persons of rank that fell by the hand of Samson on that occasion.' *Paxton.* By the 'thirty change of garments' is probably to be understood the upper vestments or tunics common in the East, usually called *caftans*, and answering nearly to our *cloaks*. The idea of the passage seems to be, that Samson offered thirty dresses, which there is reason to suppose consisted only of a shirt and upper garment.

14. *Out of the eater came forth meat*, &c. Or, Heb. יצא מאכל *yetzë maakal*, *came forth food.* The antithesis in the first clause is sufficiently obvious, viz. that an all-devouring creature, contrary to what might naturally be expected, should afford food to others. But in the second, it is less plain; for the opposite of *strength* is not *sweetness*, but *weakness.* If it had been, 'Out of the *sharp* or *bitter* came forth *sweetness*,' the opposition would have been perfect. Bochart, however, has very plausibly shown that the original for *bitter* is occasionally used for *strong*, and *sharp* for both. So in the Arab. *Mirra*, *strength*, and *Marir*, *strong*, *robust*, come from the root *Marra*, which signifies *to be bitter.* Thus,

15 And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they said unto Samson's wife, [m] Entice thy husband, that he may declare unto us the riddle [n] lest we burn thee and thy father's house with fire: have ye called us to take that we have? *is it* not *so*?

[m] ch. 16. 5. [n] ch. 15. 6.

16 And Samson's wife wept before him and said, [o] Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not: thou hast put forth a riddle unto the children of my people, and hast not told *it* me. And he said unto her, Behold, I have not told *it* my father nor my mother, and shall I tell *it* thee?

[o] ch. 16. 15.

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too, in the Latin, *acer*, *sharp*, applied to a man, denotes one who is *valiant*, who *eagerly* engages his enemy; and what is worthy of notice, this very term is employed by Ovid as an epithet for *lions*;—'Genus *acre* leonum,' the *sharp* or *fierce* kind of lions. The true antithesis of the riddle, therefore, may be stated thus:—'Food came from the devourer, and sweetness from that which is *sharp*;' i. e. eager, fierce, violent. The Syr. and Arab. both render the original by *bitter* instead of *strong*, and some copies of the Gr. Sept. instead of απο ισχυρου *from the strong*, exhibit the reading απο πικρου *from the bitter*. Josephus gives the enigma in this form, 'A great devourer produced sweet food out of itself, though itself was very disagreeable.' Probably to a Hebrew ear, when the riddle was found out, the terms would be as expressive and suitable as any that could have been chosen. This enigma, though soluble, was one well calculated to task their ingenuity to the utmost, notwithstanding Henry's remark, that 'if they had but so much sense as to consider what eater is most strong, and what meat is most sweet, they would have found out the riddle; and neither lions nor honey were such strangers to their country, that the thoughts of them needed to be out of their way.' But the point was, not to conceive of these objects *separately*, but *in a peculiar relation to each other*, and the difficulty of this arose from the fact that they would naturally conceive of the eater as *still alive*. It was, however, well adapted to the purpose for which Providence designed it should be overruled.

15. *On the seventh day.* That is, of the week, being the fourth of the feast, as appears from comparing v. 14 and 17.——¶ *Have ye called us to take that we have?* Have ye invited us to the feast for the purpose of impoverishing us by taking away what we have?

16. *Wept before him.* Heb. ותבך עליו *vattĕbk âlauv*, *wept upon him.* The sequel showed, however, that they were crocodile tears which she shed on this occasion.——¶ *I have not told it to my father, nor my mother.* Though I have had more experience of their fidelity, and more reason to trust their taciturnity than thine. 'In all parts of the world, I believe, people are pretty much alike, as to their capability of keeping secrets. The Hindoos, however, improperly reflect upon the female sex in their proverb, "*To a woman tell not a secret.*" That secret must be great indeed which will prevent a son or

17 And she wept before him the seven days, while their feast lasted: and it came to pass on the seventh day, that he told her, because she lay sore upon him: and she told the riddle to the children of her people.

18 And the men of the city said unto him on the seventh day before the sun went down, What *is* sweeter than honey? and what *is* stronger than a lion? And he said unto them, If ye had not ploughed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle.

19 ¶ And [p] the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon, and slew thirty men of them, and took their spoil, and gave change

[p] ch. 3. 10, and 13. 25.

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daughter from telling it to the father or mother. The greatest proof of confidence is to say, "I have told you what I have not revealed to my father." In proof of the great affection one has for another, it is said, "He has told things to him that he would not have related to his parents." "My friend, do tell me the secret."—"Tell you? yes, when I have told my parents."' *Roberts.*

17. *The seven days.* That is, the rest of the seven days.——¶ *Lay sore upon him.* Rather, Heb. 'strongly urged, solicited, or pressed him.'——¶ *She told the riddle.* The meaning of the riddle. When we trust a secret out of our own breast, we must not expect it will long continue such. It was not the mark of a wise man in Samson to suppose that another would be more faithful to him than he was to himself.

18. *What is sweeter than honey? what is stronger than a lion?* This must be understood merely as a compend of the solution of the riddle, for it was not simply the two distinct objects, the *lion* and the *honey*, which constituted its point, but the 'coming out' of the one from the other, and unless the manner of this was stated, we do not see how the riddle could properly be considered as solved.——¶ *If ye had not ploughed with my heifer,* &c. A proverbial expression, intimating that the Philistines could not have obtained the solution of the riddle without availing themselves of the assistance of his wife. Samson might justly have disputed the point with them, inasmuch as they did not find out the riddle themselves, but gained the knowledge of it by treachery; nevertheless he generously determined to abide by the forfeit.

19. *The Spirit of the Lord came upon him.* See on v. 6.——¶ *Went down to Ashkelon, and slew thirty men of them,* &c. Ashkelon was a city possessed at this time by the Philistines, and one of their five lordships, though it had previously been taken and for some time held by Judah, ch. 1. 18. It was situated fifteen miles north of Gaza, nine north of Ashdod, and about forty west from Jerusalem. The divine predictions respecting it have been so literally fulfilled, that there is not, says Richardson, an inhabitant within its walls; its lofty towers lie scattered on the ground, and the ruins within its walls do not shelter a human being. Samson's going to this distant city and taking the lives of thirty of its inhabitants can only be justified on the general ground of his being raised up to be

of garments unto them which expounded the riddle. And his anger was kindled, and he went up to his father's house.

20 But Samson's wife [q] was *given* to his companion, whom he had used as [r] his friend.

[q] ch. 15. 2. [r] John 3. 29.

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a judge and deliverer of his people, and to avenge their Philistine oppressors. The inference is reasonable, that the Spirit of the Lord came upon him not only to *enable*, but also to *authorize* him to perform the deed here mentioned. 'It is just with God to destine what enemies he pleases to execution. It is not to be inquired, why this man is stricken rather than another, when both are Philistines.' *Bp. Hall.*——¶ *Took their spoil.* Their apparel; the garments which they had on, and of which he stripped their dead bodies. Express mention, it is true, is not here made of the *sheets* or *shirts*, but they are evidently implied from v. 13. The Jewish critics make it a question how Samson, being a Nazarite, and consequently forbidden to touch a dead body, Num. 6. 6, could, without pollution, have possessed himself of the raiment of these slain Philistines. The question is one of no great moment, as the *facts* in the case force us to the conclusion, either that this prohibition was binding only upon the *temporary*, and not upon the *perpetual* Nazarites, or that God through his Spirit acting in and by Samson, granted him a dispensation in this particular; as the same authority which *binds* has power also to *loose*, in regard to ceremonial observances.——¶ *His anger was kindled.* Against his perfidious wife and his thirty companions, whose treatment of him had been so treacherous and unprincipled.——¶ *He went up to his father's house.* Abandoning for the present his new-married wife, but not, we think, with the design of a permanent desertion. It was probably with a view, in a mild way, to signify his displeasure at her recent conduct, and to bring her to the expression of a suitable regret. The result, however, was different from what he anticipated.

20. *Samson's wife was* given *to his companion*, &c. Heb. תהי למרעהו *tehi lemëreëhu*, *became to his companion.* The consent and agency of her parents in this disposal of her are not expressed, but implied. It is probable that they were by this time, on further acquaintance with Samson, quite willing to have the connexion broken up, and to be rid of one whose intimate relation to them augured no good, and accordingly seized the colorable pretence of his temporary withdrawment to make the separation lasting. 'What pretence of friendship soever he make, a true Philistine will soon be weary of an Israelite.' *Bp. Hall.*——¶ *Whom he had used as his friend.* With whom he had been upon the most intimate terms. This person, technically termed the *paranymph*, was probably what is called in the New Testament the 'friend of the bridegroom.' He was a trusted friend, and charged with a peculiarly delicate and confidential office. He devoted himself for a time almost entirely to the affairs of the bridegroom; before the day of marriage, he was usually the medium of communication between the bridegroom and the

## CHAPTER XV.

BUT it came to pass within a while after, in the time of wheat-harvest, that Samson visited his wife with a kid; and he said, I will go in to my wife into the chamber. But her father would not suffer him to go in.

2 And her father said, I verily thought that thou hadst utterly [a]hated her; therefore I gave her to thy companion: *is* not her younger sister fairer than she? take her, I pray thee, instead of her.

3 ¶ And Samson said concern-

[a] ch. 14. 20.

bride; during the marriage festivity, he was in constant attendance, doing his best to promote the hilarity of the entertainments, and rejoicing in the happiness of his friend. Nor did his duties terminate with the completion of the marriage, but he was considered the patron and confidential friend of both parties, and was usually called in to compose any differences that might arise between them. Samson's friend must, as his paranymph, have had peculiar facilities for forming an acquaintance with the woman, and of gaining her favorable notice; and the treachery of one whom he had so largely trusted, must have been peculiarly distressing to him. Wrongs done by a friend wound the spirit more deeply than any others. 'It was thou, my *friend*,' says David.

## CHAPTER XV.

1. *In the time of wheat-harvest.* Which in that country was in April and May. The time of the visit is specified in reference to the exploit subsequently mentioned, v. 4, 5.——¶ *Visited his wife with a kid.* Carrying a kid in token of reconciliation. Time had now cooled his resentment, and probably not knowing that she had meanwhile been given to another, he was willing to make the first overtures of returning amity. 'The wisest, though offended, will be the first to seek peace, and the readiest to pass by a transgression.' *Haweis.*——¶ *He said, I will go in,* &c. He said to himself; he proposed; he formed the purpose.——¶ *Into the chamber.* Into the interior apartments appropriated to the women; the harem.

2. *I verily thought that thou hadst utterly hated her.* Heb. אמר אמרתי *âmor âmarti, saying, I said that thou,* &c. I said in my heart, I certainly concluded. The excuse was very frivolous, for it does not appear that Samson was long absent, and at any rate, he had no right to bestow her again in marriage without first apprising him of his intention. The act of repudiation in the East was always supposed to originate with the husband, and not with the wife.——¶ *Is not her younger sister fairer than she?* Heb. טובה ממנה *tobâh mimmenâh, better than she.* Words expressive of moral qualities are, in Hebrew and other languages, frequently applied to personal endowments. Thus in English we have 'good-looking' for handsome.——¶ *Take her.* Heb. תהי לך *tehi lekâ, let her be to thee.* Thus, in fact, proposing what would have been to Samson an incestuous marriage, Lev. 18. 18, however the Philistines regarded it.

3. *Samson said concerning them.*

ing them, Now shall I be more blameless than the Philistines, though I do them a displeasure.

4 And Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took fire-brands, and turned tail to

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Said to himself. It is very improbable that he would have announced verbally to any one the purpose which he had now conceived in his mind. In forming this resolution, he acted rather in a public than a private capacity. Had he aimed to avenge only his personal injuries, it would have been sufficient to have chastised his rival and his father-in-law only: but as the slight which excited his indignation had no doubt been put upon him because he was an Israelite, he determines as an Israelite to seek revenge. He had done what was proper in endeavoring by a present to effect a reconciliation with his wife, but as his overtures had been repulsed, no one could blame him if he now showed his just resentments. When we have done our best to prevent a quarrel, we cannot be charged with the consequences of it.

4. *Went and caught three hundred foxes.* Not that he did this in one day, or that he did it alone. In the Scripture idiom, a person is continually described as doing that which he orders to be done, and no doubt such a person as Samson could easily command whatever assistance he required. Nor is it to be supposed that the scene of devastation was confined to one particular place. From the subsequent narrative it would appear that the destruction of the corn-fields extended widely over the territories of the Philistines. Comp. v. 6. As to the kind of animal employed on this occasion, there has been no small controversy among expositors. The Heb. word שועלים *shualim*, is now generally agreed to have included in its meaning not only 'foxes,' but also 'jackals,' an animal rightly described as something between the wolf and the fox, and hence sometimes termed by naturalists 'the wolf-fox.' These animals, which were very numerous in Palestine, associate together in large herds or packs, sometimes to the amount of two or three hundred; differing in this respect from the fox, which is not gregarious, and is far more cunning. Like foxes, however, they live in holes, which they form under ground, and they are particularly prone to resort to ruined towns, not only because they there find numerous secure retreats ready made, but because the same facilities attract to such places other animals, on whose dead bodies they prey. From this circumstance, the prophets in describing the future desolation of a city, say it shall become 'the habitation of jackals,' a prediction verified by the actual condition of many places to which their prophecies apply. Thus it is said by travellers that the ruins of Ascalon in particular afford habitation to great numbers of these animals. The howlings of these packs of jackals are frightful, and give great alarm to travellers; whence they are also called in Heb. איים *Ayim*, *howlers*, improperly rendered 'wild beasts of the islands.' Is. 13. 22; Jer. 2. 39. But it appears that the common fox is also of frequent occurrence in Palestine, and as both are included under the common term

tail, and put a fire-brand in the midst between two tails.

5 And when he had set the brands on fire, he let *them* go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks, and also the standing corn, with the vineyards *and* olives.

6 ¶ Then the Philistines said, Who hath done this? And they answered, Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he had taken his wife, and given her to his companion. [b] And the Philistines came up, and burnt her and her father with fire.

[b] ch. 14. 15.

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*Shual*, it must generally be left to the bearing of the context to determine when the jackal and when the fox are respectively denoted. That the jackal is intended in the text now before us, we may infer from the number of animals taken by Samson, which must have been easier with creatures prowling in large droves, than with a solitary and very wily animal like the fox.——¶ *Took firebrands.* Rather, Heb. לפּדרם *lappidim, torches.* A *firebrand*, in such a position, if sufficiently ignited to kindle a blaze in the shocks of corn, would soon have burnt itself free from the tails of the foxes, or have been extinguished by being drawn over the ground. A torch or flambeau, on the other hand, made of resinous wood or artificial materials, being more tenacious of flame, would have answered a far better purpose; and such is the legitimate import of the original.——¶ *And turned tail to tail.* This was doubtless intended to prevent them from making too rapid a retreat to their holes, or, indeed, from going to their holes at all. They were probably not so tied that they should pull in different directions, but that they might run deviously and slowly, side by side, and so do the more effectual execution. Had he put a torch to the tail of each, the creature, naturally terrified at fire, would instantly have betaken itself to its hole or some place of retreat, and thus the design of Samson would have been wholly frustrated. But by tying two of them together by the tail they would frequently thwart each other in running, and thus cause the greater devastation. If it be asked why Samson resorted to such an expedient at all, instead of firing the cornfields with his own hand, which would have been a much simpler and easier method of compassing his object, we may say perhaps in reply, that by the meanness and weakness of the instruments employed he designed to put a more signal contempt upon the enemies with whom he contended, thus mingling ridicule with revenge.

6. *And they answered*, &c. 'The mention of the offence draws in (that of) the provocation; and now the wrong to Samson is scanned and revenged; because the fields of the Philistines are burned for the wrong done to Samson by the Timnite in his daughter, therefore the Philistines burn the Timnite and his daughter. The tying of the firebrand between two foxes was not so witty a policy, as the setting of a fire of dissension betwixt the Philistines.' *Bp. Hall.*——¶ *Burnt her and her father with fire.* A most inhuman and barbarous act, on the part of its perpetrators,

7 ¶ And Samson said unto them, Though ye have done this, yet will I be avenged of you, and after that I will cease.

8 And he smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter. And he went down and dwelt in the top of the rock Etam.

9 ¶ Then the Philistines went up, and pitched in Judah, and spread themselves [c] in Lehi.

[c] ver. 19.

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yet wonderfully overruled in the Providence of God to chastise the guilty. The Philistines had threatened Samson's wife that if she did not obtain and disclose her husband's secret, they would burn her and her father's house with fire. She, to save herself and oblige her countrymen, betrayed her husband; and now by so doing brought upon herself the very doom which she so studiously sought to avoid! To seek to escape suffering by sin, is the surest way to bring it upon us! 'The fear of the wicked it shall come upon him.'

7. *Though ye have done this*, &c. Though you have thought by this act of cruelty to my wife and kindred, to make amends for the injury done to me, yet flatter not yourselves that I am thereby appeased, and that I shall forbear farther hostilities. He doubtless saw that his wife and her family were victims to a hasty indignation occasioned by their own losses, rather than the subjects of a righteous and well-considered retribution, and that accordingly there was no reason for him, as a public judge, called and appointed of God to deliver his country from oppression, to cease to prosecute that work.

8. *Smote them hip and thigh.* Heb. יך אותם שוק על ירך *yak othâm shōk al yârëk, smote them leg upon thigh.* Apparently a proverbial expression, implying, according to Gesenius, that he cut them in pieces, so that their limbs, their legs and thighs, were scattered and heaped promiscuously together; equivalent to saying, that he totally destroyed them. Whether this be the genuine interpretation admits of some doubt, but as we have nothing more plausible to propose, it is left to the reader's judgment, as one of the cases where entire satisfaction as to the writer's meaning, is unattainable. That a signal overthrow and a great slaughter is intended, seems to be unquestionable.——¶ *Dwelt in the top of the rock Etam.* Rather, according to the Heb., 'in a cleft, in a fissure of the rock.' Of the exact position of this place, or of Samson's motive in resorting thither, we are not informed. It was probably a natural fortress, affording peculiar advantages for defence, of which Samson no doubt foresaw, that he would soon be in need of availing himself. Their recent defeat would naturally rouse the wrath of his enemies and bring them upon him in all their force. It seems altogether likely from his words in the concluding part of v. 7, that he had accomplished his present purpose of revenge, and designed no farther annoyance to the Philistines unless provoked to it by new aggressions on their part. If they then will rouse the sleeping lion, let them expect to pay dear for their temerity.

9. *Pitched in Judah and spread themselves in Lehi.* Etam, the stronghold to which Samson had now

10 And the men of Judah said, Why are ye come up against us? And they answered, To bind Samson are we come up, to do to him as he hath done to us.

11 Then three thousand men of Judah went to the top of the rock Etam, and said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines *are* [d] rulers over us? what *is* this *that* thou hast done unto us? And he said unto them, As they did unto me, so have I done unto them.

12 And they said unto him, We are come down to bind thee, that we may deliver thee into the hand of the Philistines. And Samson said unto them, Swear unto me, that ye will not fall upon me yourselves.

[d] ch. 14. 4.

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betaken himself, was in the tribe of Judah, and the Philistines probably intended by suddenly appearing with a large army in their borders, to intimidate that tribe, and make them subservient to their design of capturing Samson. 'Lehi' is so called here by anticipation, as it received that name from the slaughter with the jaw-bone, which had not yet taken place.

10. *To bind Samson are we come up*, &c. From the sequel it would appear that their answer included also a demand upon the men of Judah for their services and co-operation in making a prisoner of Samson.

11. *Knowest thou not that the Philistines* are *rulers over us?* A most degrading confession to come from the lips of an Israelite, and plainly showing that they had become contented slaves, more fearful of offending the Philistines than anxious to assert their independence. But their spirits were broken by the base bondage which their iniquities had brought upon them, and instead of bravely setting Samson at their head, to fight for their liberty, they meanly resolve to make a sacrifice of him to his enemies! preferring ignominious servitude to a generous struggle for their country. Instead of honoring him for his courage, they blame him for his rashness, and desire him peaceably to submit to their bonds!

12. *Swear unto me that ye will not fall upon me yourselves.* Though he had abundant occasion to expostulate with them on account of their ingratitude, and to upbraid them with their cowardice and infatuation, yet he generously forbears reproaches, and merely demands assurance that he should receive no harm at their hands. He does not make the stipulation for fear of them, for he could as easily have freed himself from the hands of his brethren as from those of the Philistines, but he would avoid the *necessity* of acting towards them as enemies. His motive for consenting thus readily to be bound and delivered up to the Philistines undoubtedly was, that he knew the issue of it would be to afford him a new occasion of inflicting vengeance upon that oppressive race. 'Samson abides to be tied by his own countrymen, that he may have the glory of freeing himself victoriously. Even so, O Saviour, our better Nazarite, thou, which couldst have called to thy father, and have had twelve legions of angels for thy rescue, wouldst be bound voluntarily that thou mightest triumph! So the

13 And they spake unto him, saying, No: but we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into their hand: but surely we will not kill thee. And they bound him with two new cords, and brought him up from the rock.

14 ¶ *And* when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him: and [e] the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and the cords that *were* upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands.

15 And he found a new jaw-bone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it, and [f] slew a thousand men therewith.

16 And Samson said, With the jaw-bone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men.

[e] ch. 3. 10, and 14. 6.

[f] ch. 3. 31. Lev. 26. 8. Josh. 23. 10.

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blessed martyrs were racked and would not be loosed, because they expected a better resurrection. If we be not as well ready to suffer ill as to do good, we are not fit for the consecration of God.' *Bp. Hall.*

13. *Brought him up from the rock.* From the cleft or cave of the rock in which he had taken shelter. See on v. 8. From hence he was brought to Lehi, where the Philistines had pitched their camp.

14. *Became as flax that was burnt.* A flaxen or hempen cord that has been burnt in the fire will still retain its form when taken out, but it has no strength; it is henceforth a mere cinder and falls to pieces at the slightest touch. Such, in point of weakness, were the cords with which Samson was now bound. In the ensuing clause, 'his bands loosed (Heb. melted),' the figure is varied and the bands represented as *flowing off* his limbs like a liquid substance.

15. *Found a new jaw-bone of an ass.* Heb. טריה *teriyyâh*, *green or moist*, i. e. the jaw-bone of an ass recently dead. The bones of any animal in such a state, would not so easily break as when they had become dry.

16. *Heaps upon heaps.* Heb. חמור חמרתים *'hamor 'hamorâthâyim*, *an heap, two heaps.* The original contains a peculiar play upon the sound of the words, which cannot be transferred into any other language. The same word in Hebrew, חמור *'hamor*, signifies both an *ass* and a *heap*, thus forming an elegant paranomasia, and representing the Philistines falling as tamely as asses. Some have considered this short pean of Samson as faulty in not ascribing his victory more directly and unequivocally to God, who had enabled him to accomplish it. The words, it is true, contain no express mention of the name of Jehovah, but it cannot, we think, be fairly inferred that the recognition of the divine power was not present to his thoughts, or that he intended to ascribe the result to the prowess of his own arm. It is perhaps rather to be understood as an exclamation of grateful and adoring wonder, that he, who was in himself a poor, weak worm, should have been enabled, with such a contemptible instrument, to effect so signal an overthrow of his enemies.

17. *Called that place Ramath-lehi.* And by contraction 'Lehi;' as was

17 And it came to pass when he had made an end of speaking, that he cast away the jawbone out of his hand, and called that place Ramath-lehi.

18 ¶ And he was sore athirst, and called on the LORD, and said, [g] Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant: and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?

19 But God clave a hollow place that *was* in the jaw, and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, [h] his spirit came again, and he revived. Wherefore he called the name thereof En-hakkore, which *is* in Lehi unto this day.

[g] Ps. 3. 7.

[h] Gen. 45. 27. Isai. 40. 29. Ps. 34. 6.

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usual with proper names, as Salem for Jerusalem, Sheba for Beersheba, and many others. The exact import of the original רמת לחי *ramath-lehi*, is not easily determined. It may mean either 'the casting away of the jaw-bone,' 'the lifting up of the jaw-bone,' or 'the hill of the jaw-bone.' The last is most consistent with grammatical structure, and unites in its support the suffrages of the greatest number of modern critics.

19. *God clave a hollow place.* That is, so clave the ground or the rock *as to make a hollow place.* Thus Ps. 74. 15, 'Thou didst cleave the fountain;' i. e. thou didst cleave the rock so as to cause a fountain to spring up in it. Thus Is. 47. 2, 'Take the millstones and grind meal;' i. e. grind corn into meal. Judg. 16. 30, 'The dead which he slew at his death,' &c., i. e. those who became dead by his slaying them. The original for 'hollow-place,' elsewhere, signifies *a mortar*, and here denotes undoubtedly that a cavity was now made in the earth of the form of a mortar, on which account Horsley not unaptly renders it, 'clave a mortar-hole in Lehi.'——¶ *That was in the jaw.* An unfortunate rendering, as is now almost universally conceded. The writer undoubtedly meant to say, that God clave a hollow place which was in *Lehi*, and not in the jaw-bone. Indeed the propriety of this reading is evident from the context; for if we have 'jaw,' or, 'jaw-bone' here, we ought to retain it in the concluding clause of this verse, and instead of saying, 'which is *in Lehi* unto this day, say, 'which is *in the jaw-bone* unto this day.' The fact that the Hebrew word for 'jaw-bone,' and for 'Lehi,' is the same, and a fondness for multiplying miracles, probably led several of the ancient versions to understand *Lehi* here as denoting the *jaw-bone* of the ass rather than the *place* so called. ——¶ *His spirit came again.* His strength and spirits, exhausted by the excessive fatigue of the recent encounter, were effectually revived. ——¶ *He called the name thereof En-hakkore.* That is, 'the fountain of him that called or prayed.' Geddes, 'invocation-well.' Instead of 'he called,' the proper rendering undoubtedly is, 'it was called,' i. e. this became its popular appellation, as it seems to have become henceforward a perennial spring. According to the distinction of the Hebrew accents the whole clause is to be translated thus; 'And the name thereof was

20 And he judged Israel [l]in the days of the Philistines twenty years.

[l] ch. 13. 1.

## CHAPTER XVI.

THEN went Samson to Gaza, and saw there an harlot, and went in unto her.

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called unto this day En-hakkore, which is in Lehi.'

20. *Judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years.* His administration is supposed not to have been strictly universal or extended over the whole of Israel, but limited rather to the southwestern district of Palestine, where the oppression of the people was most severe. The phrase, 'in the days of the Philistines,' is peculiar, implying the days or the period during which the Philistines had the upper hand of Israel; leaving us to infer that Samson's efforts did not avail entirely to crush, but only to restrain, limit and weaken the power of the oppressors. The Lord did not grant a full deliverance, because his people were not yet sufficiently chastised for their sins. Indeed it was not till the days of David that the Philistine yoke was completely shaken off, 2 Sam. 3. 18. Of the adjustment of the period of twenty years here mentioned, see ch. 13. 1.

## CHAPTER XVI.

1. *Then went Samson to Gaza.* This place was the capital and the most important of the five Philistine principalities, and was situated about fifteen miles south of Ascalon, sixty miles southwest from Jerusalem, and between two and three miles from the sea. It was a very ancient city, and is always spoken of in the Old Testament as a place of great importance. In more modern times it has undergone a great variety of changes occasioned by the fortunes of war, till at present it has declined to a trading village of some three or four thousand inhabitants. It stands upon a hill of about two miles circumference at the base, surrounded by valleys, and overlooking a prospect of much beauty. Environed by and interspersed with gardens and plantations of olive and date trees, the town has a picturesque appearance to which its numerous elegant minarets not a little contribute. The buildings being mostly of stone, and the streets moderately broad, the interior answers expectation better than most other towns of Syria, and affords accommodations far superior to most places in Egypt. The suburbs, however, are composed of miserable mud huts; but all travellers concur with Sandys in admiring the variety and richness of the vegetable productions, both wild and cultivated, of the environs. The inhabitants have manufactures of cotton and soap, but derive their principal support from the commerce between Egypt and Syria, which must all pass this way. Scarcely any of its ancient remains are now to be found. Those of which travellers gave an account a century or two ago, have nearly all disappeared.—The real motive by which Samson was prompted in this visit to Gaza, it is vain to attempt to discover. We can scarcely, however, from the sequel resist the impression that his spiritual affections had suffered a serious decline, that he had relaxed the vigilance and circumspection of his

2 *And it was told* the Gazites, saying, Samson is come hither. And they [a]compassed *him* in, and laid wait for him all night in the gate of the city, and were quiet all the night, saying, In the morning when it is day we shall kill him.

3 And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight, and took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put *them* upon his should-

[a] 1 Sam. 23 26. Ps. 118. 10, 11, 12. Acts 9. 24.

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walk as a Nazarite, and that he ventured uncalled among the uncircumcised. Considering the relation in which he stood to the Philistines, and the light in which he was regarded by them, it was certainly a step full of personal danger, provided he went thither openly and without disguise. But from the context it would rather appear, that he entered the gates without the citizens being at first apprised of the fact. His being there, however, was soon noised abroad, and his enemies were at once on the alert with their machinations to get him in their power, and what security for safety have they who wander unbidden from the path of duty?——¶*And saw there an harlot*, &c. The seeing this lewd woman was not perhaps the moving cause of his going to Gaza, but being there he accidentally fell in with her, and was unhappily ensnared by the sight of his eyes. How have the strongest in grace occasion to pray, Lead us not into temptation!

2. And it was told *the Gazites saying*, &c. The original word, ויגד *vayuggad*, corresponding to the Italics, is so essential to the completion of the sense here, that there can be little doubt that it has by some accident been omitted. This is confirmed by the fact that the ancient versions for the most part exhibit its equivalent.——¶ *They compassed* him *in.* Heb. ויסבו *vayâsobu, they went round about.* With the utmost activity they traversed the city to and fro, conversing with each other, concerting plans, and adopting measures to make a captive of their most formidable foe. Their principal precaution, it seems, was to station sentinels at the gates to apprehend him as he should attempt to pass out in the morning.——¶ *Were quiet all the night.* Heb. יתחרשו *yith'hâreshu, kept themselves silent*; as if by special constraint. They would do nothing, make no disturbance, create no alarm, that would endanger the success of their schemes.

3. *Took the doors of the gate.* Heb. ויאחז *yeehōz, laid hold of, seized.* Not the great gate itself, but the two smaller doors or leaves, constructed within the large gate, and which alone were opened on ordinary occasions. The posts, bar, &c., of these were different from the more solid and massy fixtures of the great gate, which of course he could not think of removing. It was indeed an instance of divine forbearance at which Samson had occasion to wonder that his supernatural strength was yet continued to him, notwithstanding his aggravated offence. We should have thought that his very convictions of conscience would have unnerved his arm, and rendered him all but absolutely powerless. But

ers, and carried them up to the top of an hill that *is* before Hebron.

4 ¶ And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name *was* Delilah.

5 And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, [b] Entice him, and see wherein his great strength *lieth*, and by what *means* we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him: and we

[b] ch. 14. 15. See Prov. 2. 16–19, and 5. 3–11, and 6. 24, 25, 26, and 7. 21, 22, 23.

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God may have wise reasons for deferring the punishment of those sins which yet do by no means pass with impunity. Samson is reprieved but not pardoned ——¶ *A hill that is before Hebron.* Rightly understood and rendered by the Sept. ' which looketh towards Hebron;' for the town of Hebron was twenty miles distant from Gaza.

4. *It came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman*, &c. It is to be feared that Samson's impunity, at least for the present, in the former instance, emboldened him to give way a second time to unhallowed desires. 'Custom of success makes men confident in their sins, and causes them to mistake an arbitrary tenure for a perpetuity.' *Bp. Hall.* The same idea is more emphatically expressed by Solomon :—' Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.' It is not indeed expressly affirmed that this woman was a harlot, like the former, but from the tenor of the ensuing narrative, it is scarcely to be questioned that she was. She is no where called his wife; he did not take her home to his house; and the whole train of her negotiations with her countrymen go to prove that she was a mercenary and perfidious courtezan, governed in her conduct towards Samson by interest instead of affection, if indeed it be not profaning the term *affection* to use it in connexion with such an illicit and degrading intercourse.—Of the position of the valley of Sorek nothing certain is known.—As to the name of this vile woman, 'Delilah,' its import is that of *humbling, abasing, bringing down*, and like hundreds of other names in the Scriptures, originating in events, may have been derived from the evil influence which she exerted upon Samson.

5. *Entice him, and see*, &c. 'The princes of the Philistines,' as Bp. Hall shrewdly remarks, ' knew already where Samson's *weakness* lay, though not his *strength*, and therefore they would entice his harlot with gifts to entice him.' These five satraps made common cause on this occasion, considering Samson a public enemy whom it equally concerned them all to crush if possible.——¶ *Wherein his great strength lieth.* Rather, Heb. בּמּה כחו גדול *bammëh ko'hu gâdol, whereby, or for what cause his strength is (so) great.* Perhaps imagining it was the effect of some charm, spell, or amulet, which he carried about with him, and that if they could get possession of this, they would soon have him in their power. ——¶ *That we may bind him to afflict him.* Or, Heb. 'to humble, to depress, to bring him low.' They do not say expressly ' to kill him,' though

will give thee every one of us eleven hundred *pieces* of silver.

6 ¶ And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength *lieth*, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee?

7 And Samson said unto her, If they bind me with seven green withs, that were never dried,

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this was their ultimate intention, but they no doubt saw that the plain avowal of such a bloody purpose would shock too much whatever feelings of woman yet remained in the bosom of Delilah, and would thus defeat their plan; besides, it is clear from the event that they designed by a series of aggravated insults and injuries to torture and break down his spirit, and thus prolong their triumph before putting the finishing stroke to it in his death.——¶ *Eleven hundred pieces of silver.* These pieces of silver were probably shekels, and the total sum according to our computation would amount to upwards of $2,000, a vast bribe for the time and country.

6. *Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth.* It can scarcely be supposed that this question was so bluntly and nakedly propounded as here stated, as in that case her treacherous design could not well have failed to betray itself. It is the general usage of the sacred writers merely to give the leading incidents, the prominent outlines, of the events which they relate, leaving the details to be supplied by the reflection of the reader. In this case she undoubtedly plied all her arts of blandishment and persuasion, and by taking advantage of his yielding moods, and expressing her admiration of his wonderful exploits, aimed to throw him off his guard, and thus win his secret from him unawares. But as yet he retained sufficient self-possession to elude her cunning.

7. *If they bind me with seven green withs*, &c. How Samson's veracity in this reply is to be vindicated, we know not. Probably the same obtuseness of conscience which made him insensible to the guilt of one species of sin, rendered him reckless of another. How fearful the effects of suffering the moral sense to be deadened by a single case of wilful transgression! As the word translated 'withs,' (יתר *yether*,) is a general word for *rope*, or *cord*, we learn by the use of the epithet 'green,' that the ropes in use among the Hebrews, like those employed in many other countries and formed of osiers, hazels, &c., were made of crude vegetable materials, such as vines, tendrils, pliable twisted rods, or the tough fibres of trees. And Josephus expressly says that the ropes with which Samson was bound were made of the tendrils of the vine. Such ropes are still used in the East, and while they remain green are stronger than any other. In India the legs of wild elephants and buffaloes newly caught are commonly bound with bonds of this sort; those of hemp and flax being rarely found there. Except some that are formed of hair or leather, they are generally made of the fibres of trees (particularly of the palm tree), of roots, of grasses, and of reeds and rushes. They are in general tolerably strong, but in no degree comparable to our own hempen ropes.

then shall I be weak, and be as another man.

8 Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven green withs, which had not been dried, and she bound him with them.

9 (Now *there were* men lying in wait, abiding with her in the chamber.) And she said unto him, the Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And he brake the withs as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire. So his strength was not known.

10 And Delilah said unto Samson, Behold, thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: now tell me, I pray thee, wherewith thou mightest be bound.

11 And he said unto her, If

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Though light, yet wanting in compactness, they are much thicker than those employed by us, and are generally rough and coarse to the eye. The Septuagint, however, by translating the Hebrew by νευραις ὑγραις, and the Vulgate by *nerviceis funibus*, understand these bonds to be *cords made of the sinews of cattle*, or perhaps out of *raw hides*, which make exceedingly strong cords. But the objection to this rendering is, that animal sinews or hides when 'green,' i. e. humid, recent, have less strength than when thoroughly dried. The former is doubtless the true interpretation.——¶ *Be as another man.* Heb. כאחד האדם *kaa'hod hââdam*, *as one man*, i. e. as any man.

8. *And she bound him with them.* Perhaps in dalliance, in a sportive way, as though she were only half in earnest, or at any rate wished only to gratify her own curiosity, and see if what he had told her was true.

9. *Now* there were *men lying in wait, abiding with her in the chamber.* Heb. 'and the lier in wait (collect. sing. for plur.) sat for her in an inner apartment.' Our translation very erroneously represents the liers in wait as abiding in the same chamber where she and Samson now were; but if so, how could he but have been aware of their presence? That which we have given is the true rendering. The Heb. לָה *lâh*, is not 'with her,' but 'to or for her,' i. e. subservient to her designs.——¶ *The Philistines* be *upon thee, Samson.* Are at hand to surprise and take thee; probably the concerted signal for the men lying in wait to rush into the room, and if the experiment succeeded, and his limbs were effectually manacled, to make him prisoner at once.——¶ *When it toucheth the fire.* Heb. בהריחו אש *bahari'hu ësh*, *when it smelleth the fire;* i. e. when it perceiveth, feeleth, or hath a sensation of the fire; metaphorically spoken. The use of the term 'smell,' in this sense in the Hebrew is somewhat peculiar. Thus Job 14. 9, speaking of a tree cut down, 'Yet through the *scent* of water it will bud:' i. e. through the *perception* of water. Ps. 59. 9, 'Before your pots can *feel* the thorns.' Heb. can *smell* the thorns. Dan. 3. 27, 'Neither were their coats changed, nor the *smell* of fire had passed on them;' i. e. the *feeling*, the *perception* of fire.

10. *And Delilah said unto Samson*, &c. After the lapse of some considerable time, when she saw that her blandishments had given her an ad-

they bind me fast with new ropes that never were occupied, then shall I be weak, and be as another man.

12 Delilah therefore took new ropes, and bound him therewith, and said unto him, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. (And *there were* liers in wait abiding in the chamber.) And he brake them from off his arms like a thread.

13 And Delilah said unto Samson, Hitherto thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: tell me wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, If thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web.

14 And she fastened *it* with the pin, and said unto him, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And he awaked out of his sleep, and went away with the pin of the beam, and with the web.

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vantage over him; for to renew the attempt to worm out of him his secret, immediately after her failure would, of course, have been bad policy.

11. *If they bind me fast with new ropes.* Heb. עבתים *abothim*, from עבת *aboth*, *to wreathe*, *braid*, *twist together*, *to make thick by wreathing*, and implying ropes or cords of the thickest and strongest description, probably answering nearly to the idea of our modern cables. The material, however, may have been the same with that of the יתרים *yetherim*, mentioned above.——¶ *That never were occupied.* Heb. 'wherewith work hath not been done.'

13. *The seven locks of my head.* Heb. שבע מחלפות *sheba ma'hlephoth*, *the seven braids or plaits;* into which probably the hair of Samson was braided. As seven, however, is a usual term in the Scriptures for *completeness* or *universality*, it may here be equivalent simply to 'all my locks.' His strength, he tells her, would be weakened if these were interwoven with the warp which was in a loom hard by, perhaps in the same room; which might be the place where Delilah used to weave. This verse seems to end abruptly, but the supplementary clause, 'Then shall I be like another man,' is easily supplied from the context.

14. *And she fastened it with the pin.* Rather, she fastened it with *a* pin. Heb. תתקע ביתד *tithka bayyâthëd*, Both the original words occur in the account of Jael's *driving* (תתקע) the *pin* (היתד) into Sisera's temples, and the probability is, that the web, with Samson's lock interwoven, was in some way secured by being fixed to a strong pin which was *driven* either into the ground or into the wall, as the Septuagint understands it. Or rather, as the looms at that period were very simple, the words may import that the loom itself was more firmly secured by means of the pin driven into the ground.——¶ *With the pin of the beam*, &c. But what was 'the pin of the beam?' No intelligible sense is afforded by the phrase, nor from our ignorance of the exact structure of the ancient loom is it perhaps possible to assign one. The literal rendering of the original seems to be, 'He went away with the pin, the weaving implements, and the web;' in other words, he took away the whole ap-

15 ¶ And she said unto him, [c] How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart *is* not with me? Thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength *lieth*.

16 And it came to pass when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, *so* that his soul was vexed unto death;

17 That he [d] told her all his heart, and said unto her, [e] There hath not come a razor upon

[c] ch. 14. 16.

[d] Mic. 7. 5. [e] Num. 6. 5. ch. 13. 5.

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paratus together. We doubt if any thing more definite could be elicited from the words.

15. *When thine heart is not with me.* When thou dost not lay open thy heart to me; when thou canst not trust me with its secrets. An important practical truth lies at the foundation of this remonstrance of Delilah. It is true, that 'they only have our love, who have our hearts,' and the remark holds eminently in regard to love to God. If we profess to love Him while the warmth of our affection is withholden, and a cold reserve takes the place of that free, filial, and unreserved intercourse, which is the privilege of his people, what is to be inferred from it, but that we are deceiving ourselves with an empty show? His demand is, 'My son, give me thy heart.'

16, 17. *When she pressed him daily —he told her all his heart.* Alas! how are the mighty fallen! What an affecting exhibition of the weakness of human nature even in its best estate! Well could Samson now adopt the language of Solomon;—'I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands are bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her.' Wearied out by the ceaseless upbraidings of his vile paramour; and enslaved by the violence of his passion, the fatal secret is at length extorted from him, and the mighty Nazarite remains scarcely a common man! So perfectly captivated and intoxicated had he become, notwithstanding repeated warnings, by the vehemence of his affection, that, 'like the silly dove without heart,' he rushed upon his ruin! Had he not been completely infatuated, he would have seen before that no alternative remained to him but to break away at once and at all hazards from the enchantress, and quit the field where it was so evident that he could not keep his ground. But no chains are stronger than those woven by illicit love, and with him who becomes their prisoner, reputation, life, usefulness, yea, even God's glory, and the salvation of the soul, are put to peril in obedience to its unhallowed dictates. But the righteous judgment of God is not to be overlooked in this fearful fall of the champion of Israel. Having so long presumptuously played with his ruin, Heaven leaves him to himself as a punishment for his former guilty indulgence. He is made to reap as he had sown, and consigned to the hands of his enemies for 'the destruction of the flesh that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.' But it becomes not us to exult over the apostasy of the fallen. 'We wonder that a man could possibly be so sottish, and yet mine head; for I *have been* a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any *other* man.

18 And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath showed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand.

19 [f] And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called

we ourselves by temptation become no less insensate. Sinful pleasures, like a common Delilah, lodge in our bosoms; we know they aim at nothing but the death of our soul; we will yield to them and die. Every willing sinner is a Samson; let us not inveigh against his senselessness, but our own: nothing is so gross and unreasonable to a well-disposed mind, which temptation will not represent fit and plausible. No soul can, out of his own strength, secure himself from that sin which he most detesteth.' *Bp. Hall.* Let us learn hence, (1) That fidelity is never to be expected from those who show an utter unfaithfulness to God, and have stifled and triumphed over the inward warning voice or conscience. (2) That when the heart is infatuated by unlawful desire, repeated warnings of danger will be disregarded. (3) That they who feel themselves unable to resist the importunity of their tempters should instantly fly from their dangerous presence.——¶ *I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb.* What a confession to be made in the lap of a vile Delilah! What a commentary upon his words was afforded by his present condition! Strange that the utterance of a sentence betraying such a glaring inconsistency in his conduct should not have awakened him from the spell by which he was bound, and made him break away with his secret but half divulged! Strange, that when his own voice thus pronounced his condemnation, he should have remained as insensible as the nether mill-stone!——¶ *If I be shaven, then my strength will go from me,* &c. Not that his strength lay in his hair, for this in fact had no natural influence upon it, one way or the other. His strength arose from his peculiar *relation* to God as a Nazarite, and the preservation of his hair unshaven or unshorn was the *mark* or *sign* of his Nazariteship, and a *pledge* on the part of God of the continuance of his miraculous physical powers. If he lost this sign, the badge of his consecration, he broke his vow, and consequently forfeited the thing signified. God abandoned him, and he was thenceforward no more, in this respect, than a common man; at least, was deprived of supernatural strength.

18. *When Delilah saw,* &c. When she became satisfied by the serious tone in which he spake, and by the various tokens to be read in his countenance, air, general manner, &c., that he had told her the truth.

19. *Made him sleep upon her knees.* A custom very common in the East. 'It is very amusing to see a full-grown son, or a husband, asleep on

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[f] Prov. 7. 26, 27.

for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him.

20 And she said, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD [g] was departed from him.

his mother's or wife's knees. The plan is as follows: the female sits cross-legged on the carpet or mat, and the man having laid himself down, puts his head in her lap, and she gently taps, strokes, sings, and soothes him to sleep.' *Roberts.*——¶ *Caused him to shave off.* Heb. ותגלח *vattegalla'h, shaved off;* that is, by the agency of another, as well rendered in our common version. 'That a man should be able not only to cut, but to shave off the hair, on which, during all Samson's life, razor had never before come, implies either that Samson slept very soundly, or that the man was very dexterous in his craft. In fact the Oriental barbers do their work with so much ease, as to render the shaving of the head (the head is usually *shaven* in the East) rather grateful than unpleasant. The most delicate sleeper would scarcely be awakened by it; and even those who are awake are scarcely sensible of the operation which they are undergoing.' *Pict. Bible.*——¶ *Began to afflict him.* That is, from this act of hers commenced that series of insults, injuries, and humiliations, which his enemies had before, v. 5, announced their intention to bring upon him. He had hitherto sported thoughtlessly upon the brink of the precipice of degradation and ruin, and now his fall can no longer be delayed. As the next step in his downward career, his miraculous strength forsakes him.——¶ *His strength went from him.* Having now violated the conditions of his Nazarite vow, on which it depended. 'He that sleeps in sin must look to wake in loss and weakness.' *Bp. Hall.*

20. *Awoke out of his sleep, and said.* That is, said to himself, thought, resolved.——¶ *Will go out—and shake myself.* Shake myself free from the fetters with which I am bound, and rid myself of the enemies that would be upon me. It is not indeed expressly stated that he was bound at this time, but the probability is that such was the case, that Delilah had slyly tied his hands while he was asleep.——¶ *Wist not that the Lord was departed from him.* Being newly awakened out of sleep, he knew not that his head had been shaven of its locks, and therefore did not suspect that God had withdrawn his special influences from him. This circumstance may serve as a striking illustration of what often happens to those who have provoked God by their transgressions. By a righteous dereliction he leaves them; he withdraws his favorable presence; and yet, like Samson, they are not aware of the desertion. They feel not the loss they have sustained; at least till they begin to be sensible by frustrated schemes and adverse providences, that it is not with them as in days that are past. Though their souls languish and grow weak, and their

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[g] Num. 14. 9, 42, 43. Josh. 7. 12. 1 Sam. 16. 14, and 18. 12. and 28. 15, 16. 2 Chron. 15. 2.

21 ¶ But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison-house.

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gifts as well as their graces wither, and others perceive their spiritual decline, yet a strange delusion is upon them; they know not their real state; they fancy themselves in health and prosperity when the sources of both are effectually undermined within them. 'God is departed from him' expresses one of the most fearful forms of the divine judgments.

21. *Put out his eyes.* Heb. ינקרו *yenakkeru, bored out.* 'With the Greeks and Asiatics, the way of putting out the eyes, or blinding, was not (always) by pulling or cutting out the eyes, as some have imagined; but by drawing, or holding a red-hot iron before them. This method is still in use in Asia. According to Chardin, however, the pupils of the eyes were more frequently pierced and destroyed on such occasions. But Thevenot says, 'that the eyes in those barbarous acts are taken out whole, with the point of a dagger, and carried to the king in a basin.' He adds, that, 'as the king sends whom he pleases to do that cruel office, some princes are so butchered by unskilful hands, that it costs them their lives.' In Persia it is no unusual practice for the king to punish a rebellious city or province by exacting so many pounds of eyes; and his executioners accordingly go and scoop out from every one they meet, till they have the weight required.' *Burder.* Thus was the lust of the eye in looking after and gazing upon strange women punished. The offending organ that he had refused to pluck out was in effect plucked out for him in the righteous providence of God.——¶ *Bound him with fetters of brass.* A proof that iron, though now well known, had not yet come into general use; as otherwise we should doubtless have found Samson bound with fetters of that material. The emphasis here is not on *brass*, as distinguished from any other metal; but to show that his fetters were of metal; and that he was not, like the common class of offenders, bound with ropes or thongs of leather.——¶ *He did grind in the prison-house.* Of course with mill-stones worked by the hands, this being still the usual method of grinding corn in the East. It is an employment, however, which usually devolves on women; and to assign it to such a man as Samson, was doubtless with a view to reduce him to the lowest state of degradation and dishonor. To grind corn *for others*, was, even for a woman, a proverbial term, expressing the most degraded and oppressed condition; and how much more for Samson, who seems to have been made grinder-general for the prison-house.

'Ask for this great deliverer now, and find him
Eyeless at Gaza, at the mill with slaves.'
*Milton.*

The champion and avenger of Israel is now become the drudge and the sport of the Philistines. The crown is fallen from his head, and his honor laid in the dust. We are ready to pity the degraded judge of Israel, when we see him reduced to such a state of misery by his enemies; but

22 Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven.

23 Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together, for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice: for they said, Our god hath de-

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while we pity the *man*, we congratulate the *sinner*, to whose final salvation these heavy trials were made subservient. Let us not, however, lose sight of the solemn lesson which his misery teaches us. What a warning to those who 'yield their members instruments of iniquity.' They will find their bondage bitter and unbearable when they are finally bound with the chains which their sins have forged for them.

22. *The hair of his head began to grow again, after he was shaven.* Rather, Heb. 'according as it had been shaved;' i. e. in the same proportions as it had been cut off. This circumstance, though in itself inconsiderable, is mentioned by way of suitable preface to what follows. The letting the hair grow was a prominent circumstance in the condition of a Nazarite; and the extraordinary strength of Samson was not a matter of thews and sinews, but was conferred upon him as a special gift of God, on condition of his remaining in the state of Nazariteship. The loss of his hair did not in itself deprive him of strength; but the loss of his hair *involved* the loss of his strength, because it took from him the condition of a Nazarite, with which his extraordinary physical powers were inseparably connected. Accordingly, when we find him again growing strong, after the renewed growth of his hair, we are bound to believe that it was not because his hair grew; but because he repented of his past misconduct. God was pleased, therefore, having hereby become reconciled to his offending servant, to accept the renewal of his vow of Nazariteship, including the consecration of his hair, and in consequence of that acceptance re-invested him, as his hair grew, with the powers which he had before lost. In the language of Bp. Hall, 'his hair grew together with his repentance, and his strength with his hair.' The practical reflections of the same writer on this part of Samson's history are equally striking and just. 'It is better for Samson to be blind in prison, than to abuse his eyes in Sorek; yea, I may safely say, he was more blind when he saw licentiously, than now that he sees not; he was a greater slave when he served his affections, than now in grinding for the Philistines. The loss of his eyes shows him his sin, neither could he see how ill he had done till he saw not.' *Bp. Hall.*

23. *The lords of the Philistines gathered them together*, &c. This great festival scene had evidently been some time delayed, as appears from the fact of Samson's hair having had time to grow in the interval; but perhaps the necessary preparations for so grand an occasion consumed considerable time, or it may have been the *second* anniversary of the deliverance of their enemy into their hands.——¶ *Unto Dagon their god.* A deity of the Philistines generally represented as having the head and upper parts human, while the rest of the body resembled a fish.

livered Samson our enemy into our hand.

24 And when the people saw him, they [h]praised their god: for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country; which slew many of us.

25 And it came to pass, when their hearts were [i]merry, that they said, Call for Samson that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison-house; and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars.

26 And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them.

27 Now the house was full of men and women: and all the lords of the Philistines *were* there: and *there were* upon the [k]roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport.

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[h] Dan. 5. 4. [i] ch. 9. 27.

[k] Deut. 22. 8.

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It was called *Derceto*, among the heathens, though the Heb. word 'Dagon,' comes from 'Dag,' *a fish.* The Philistines living on the sea coast, they had a sea-idol.——¶ *Our god hath delivered*, &c. Though they knew that he was betrayed into their hands by Delilah, yet they foolishly attribute it to their god. The circumstance, however, affords a hint worth taking. If even a Philistine ascribes his victories to his idol gods, how much more are *we* bound to pay a similar tribute to our God, and give him the glory of every great and good work done by us, in us, or for us.

25. *When their hearts were merry.* Heb. כי טוב לבם *ki tōb libbam, when their heart was good.* A parallel usage occurs Ruth, 3. 7; 1 Sam. 25. 36, and elsewhere.——¶ *That he may make us sport.* That is, passively, that he may be a subject of sport and merriment to us; that we may make ourselves merry at his expense. It is quite improbable, we think, that Samson, a poor blind prisoner, should be required *actively* to engage in any thing that should make sport to his enemies. The idea doubtless is simply, that he should be brought out to become a laughing-stock to them, a butt for their scoffs, mockeries, and insults. Accordingly the Sept. version of the next clause has, 'And they *buffeted* him;' and Josephus says, he was brought out, 'that they might *insult* him in their cups.' But their triumphing was short, and their joy but for a moment. 'Nothing fills the measure of the iniquity of any person, or people, faster than mocking, or misusing the servants of God, yea, though it is by their own folly that they are brought low. Those know not what they do, nor whom they affront, that make sport with a good man.' *Henry.*

27. *Upon the roof about three thousand men and women.* The house or temple itself was full of the principal people below; while about three thousand, probably of the lower orders, had stationed themselves upon the roof, the roofs of eastern buildings, as is well known, being generally flat. In answer to the question, how this large number of persons on

28 And Samson called unto the LORD, and said, O Lord GOD, [l] remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.

29 And Samson took hold of

[l] Jer. 15. 15.

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the roof could have seen Samson while made the subject of mirth below?—it may be remarked, that we are to form our ideas of the scene from the style of building common to the East. The edifice in question undoubtedly formed a part of a quadrangular pile of building and walls, having a court or area in the centre, where Samson might be exhibited with ease to the whole assembled multitude. The *principal* building in such structures generally occupies that side of the inclosure which faces the entrance, and is *advanced* considerably out of the line of the square. It is, moreover, usually constructed with an open front to afford a clear view of what is going on in the court, having curtains to be drawn up or let down at pleasure, and supported by two or more pillars either in the front or in the centre. Samson probably after having been for some time paraded about the area, where every one could see him, requested to be conducted within the part of the edifice now described, that he might rest himself against its pillars, see on v. 29.

28. *Samson called unto the Lord, and said*, &c. It is scarcely to be presumed that this prayer was uttered audibly. It was rather, we may suppose, a mental petition, breathed forth from the depths of a broken heart, where godly sorrow had been doing its perfect work. But though the voice of his prayer was not heard of man, yet it was graciously heard and answered of God, and though he himself did not live to recite or record it, yet God, by revealing it to the inspired penman, provided for its being registered for the benefit of the church. Whether it is to be considered as embracing all that he inwardly uttered, or merely the general drift, the substance of it, is uncertain; probably the latter, according to prevailing usage in the Scripture style of narration. By praying that God would once more remember and strengthen him, he virtually acknowledged that all the wonderful exploits he had hitherto performed were owing to a strength given him from above, and that he would be powerless for the present achievement unless the same divine aid were granted him. True it is, if we regard the bare letter of his petition, it has the air of being prompted mainly by a spirit of revenge; but from God's accepting and answering the prayer, it cannot be doubted, that he looked upon himself in this transaction, not as a private but as a public person, extraordinarily called to be the instrument of a signal act of vengeance to the enemies of Israel and of God. The indignities heaped upon himself had indeed been great and grievous, and such as would be *in fact* worthily punished in the catastrophe which he meditated. But this was not his leading motive. The consideration of his personal sufferings was merged in a holy zeal for the

the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left.

30 And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with *all his* might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that *were* therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than *they* which he slew in his life.

Lord of hosts, the vindication of whose glory was of infinitely more consequence than the avengement of his own wrongs. In putting out his eyes, they had 'touched the apple' of God's eye, and this was not to be done with impunity. Under the influence of this feeling, combined with the consciousness that his own past misconduct would be no more than justly visited by a painful end, he cheerfully devotes himself to death.

29. *Took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood.* To this it has been objected, How could a roof capable of accommodating three thousand persons, be supported upon *two* pillars? But it is not said that there were *no more* than two. There might have been several others not standing in the middle or central part of the building, which contributed to the support of the roof, when at the same time the removal of the two in question, would, more than all the rest, endanger the fall of the whole edifice. The celebrated architect, Sir Christopher Wren, says, that in considering what kind of fabric it must be that could with one pull be demolished, he conceived to himself a vast roof of cedar beams resting at one end upon the walls, and centering at the other upon one short architrave that united two cedar pillars in the middle. 'One pillar would not be sufficient to unite the ends of at least one hundred beams that tended to the centre; therefore, I say, there must have been a short architrave resting upon two pillars, upon which all the beams tending to the centre might be supported. Now if Samson by his miraculous strength pressing on one (or both) these pillars, moved it from its basis, the whole roof must of necessity fall.' (*Hewlett's Bible.*)——¶ *On which it was borne up.* This idea had been already expressed in the words immediately preceding, nor does the original so well admit this rendering. The Heb. יסמך עליהם *yissâmëk alëhem*, may, we think, be more correctly translated, 'he leaned or stayed himself upon them.'

30. *Let me die.* I am content to die, if the glory of God requires it; as at once a suitable punishment to me, and means of judgment to the Philistines. Heb. 'let my soul die:' i. e. according to Hebrew usage, let my life become extinct. As to his 'soul,' as *we* understand the term, he would of course pray that that might live. Samson's death is no warrant for suicide, as it does not appear that he *directly* sought it, or designed to bring it about any farther than as it might be the inevitable consequence of destroying so many of the enemies of his people. He may be considered therefore as having perished in the same way as if he had fallen in bat-

31 Then his brethren and all the house of his father came down, and took him, and brought *him* up, and [m]buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the burying-place of Manoah his father. And he judged Israel twenty years.

[m] ch. 13. 25.

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tle like Josiah, 2 Chron. 36. 23, 34, resisting the invaders of his country. ——¶ *He bowed himself with* all his *might, and the house fell*, &c. With arms extended he grasps the massy pillars, and feeling an answer to his prayer in the renewed strength bestowed upon him, he bends himself forward with all his force; the pillars rock, the building totters, the roof, encumbered with the weight of the spectators, rushes down, and death in every tremendous shape appears. Crushed under the load or dashed to pieces in the fall, thousands expire. Their music is now changed to dying groans; and shrieks of agonizing pain, instead of songs of triumph, fill the air. Thus dies the mighty Samson, triumphant in his fall, and more terrible to the Philistines in his death than even during his life. Who can in this but be reminded of that adorable Saviour, who 'triumphed over principalities and powers upon the cross, and by death overcame him that had the power of death, and delivered those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage?'

31. *Then his brethren—came down and took him.* The overwhelming catastrophe which had destroyed the lives of so many of the lords and inferior rulers of the people, seems to have been such a crush to the Philistine power, that they troubled Israel no more for several years, and did not even attempt to hinder Samson's relations from taking away and burying his dead body. It was selected out from heaps of the slain, brought honorably to his own country, and interred in the sepulchre of his fathers.—Thus terminates the history of one of the most remarkable personages that ever distinguished the annals of the Jewish or any other people. We may learn from it, that great gifts are often connected with great imperfections. The champion of Israel possessed courage and strength, and did signal service to his country in contending with its enemies; but he had little self-government, and affords a melancholy proof how little corporeal prowess avails when judgment and prudence are wanting, and how dangerous, in fact, are all such gifts in the hands of any one, who has not his passions under proper discipline, and the fear of God continually before his eyes. While, as a Nazarite, he was careful to abstain from strong drink, he took little heed to cultivate that purity of sentiment and conduct which is a crown to every other excellence, and the want of which never fails to sully the lustre of the brightest characters.—It may here be remarked, that from the history of Samson it is generally supposed was derived that of the Hercules of the pagan mythology, and M. De Lavour, an ingenious French writer, has drawn out the parallel at full length, an abridgment of which may be seen in Dr. A. Clark's commentary. The coincidences are certain-

## CHAPTER XVII.

AND there was a man of mount Ephraim, whose name *was* Micah.

2 And he said unto his mother, The eleven hundred *shekels* of silver that were taken from thee, about which thou cursedst, and spakest of also in mine ears, behold, the silver *is* with me; I

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ly very striking, and to most minds would perhaps afford an additional proof of how much the heathen have been indebted to the Bible.

## CHAPTER XVII.

That the events related in the remaining chapters of this book did not occur in the order in which they stand in the sacred narrative, is universally admitted. They constitute a regular appendix to the book, which is inserted here that it might not interrupt the previous history of the Judges. The events themselves occurred long before the time of Samson, and probably in the interval that ensued after the death of Joshua and the elders who outlived him, and while the government was in a very unsettled state. In chronological order, the proper place for these chapters would undoubtedly be between ch. 2. and 3., as remarked on ch. 3. 11. The history comprehended in the present and the following chapter, is obviously connected with ch. 1. 34, where the reasons of the emigration of a part of the tribe of Dan to the northern quarter of Canaan are stated. 'The Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain; for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley.' The consequence was, they sought a more enlarged inheritance, and while in the course of possessing themselves of this, the events here related, resulting in the establishment of idolatry in that tribe, occurred. The sad story of the Levite's concubine and the war with Benjamin, occupies the remaining part of the appendix. These incidents are expressly said, ch. 20. 28, to have occurred while Phineas, the grandson of Aaron, was high-priest, and must therefore be assigned to about the same period.

1. *A man of mount Ephraim, whose name was Micah.* Heb. מיכיהו *Mikâyĕhu*, (i. e. who is like Jehovah?) but in the subsequent narrative the name is uniformly contracted into מיכה *Mikâh.* This the Jewish writers say is owing to the fact of his having become an idolator, after which event the sacred penman, they affirm, regarded it as a profanation of the name Jehovah to have it connected in any manner with his. By 'mount Ephraim' here is meant, as usual, the *mountainous parts* of Ephraim.

2. *About which thou cursedst.* Pronouncedst an imprecation upon the thief; or, perhaps, didst adjure or put under oath all the family to discover the money. It is not unlikely that Micah, hearing this, was alarmed and restored the money, lest the curses should fall on him. Although not sufficiently restrained by moral principle to forbear the theft, yet his conscience had not yet become so hardened as to allow him to keep what he had stolen in despite of his mother's imprecations. This shows that he was a novice, and not a vet-

took it. And his mother said, [a] Blessed *be thou* of the LORD, my son.

3 And when he had restored the eleven hundred *shekels* of silver to his mother, his mother said, I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the LORD from my hand for my son, to [b] make a graven image and a molten image: now therefore I will restore it unto thee.

4 Yet he restored the money unto his mother; and his mother

eran, in sin; as otherwise he would not have scrupled to deny, excuse, or defend it, as he saw fit.

3. *I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the Lord.* A striking illustration of the mistaken ideas which had arisen in Israel, and which gradually led them on to downright idolatry. Micah and his mother seem to have intended to honor the true God by their proceedings, which were nevertheless so contrary to the law, as really to expose them to be punished by death. What they did seems to have been to set up a little religious establishment similar to that at Shiloh, with an imitation of the ark, cherubim, priestly dresses, &c., and finally crowning the whole by obtaining a Levite to officiate as priest; and all the while they thought they were doing God service! So blind and deluded in all ages have been those who have added their human inventions to God's perfect system of worship 'If religion might be judged according to the (professed) intention, there should scarce be any idolatry in the world.' *Bp. Hall.* ——¶ *Now therefore I will restore it unto thee.* The apparent confusion in what is said in this and the ensuing verse of the 'restoring' of the money, affords no little plausibility to the rendering of this clause proposed by Schmid, '*And then* I will restore it unto thee,' i. e. after it has passed through the hands of the founder and been converted to the proposed images. Of these it would seem from the letter of the text that there were two, one sculptured of wood or stone, and then plated with silver, the other made of the solid metal cast in a mould. The original, however, will perhaps admit of the rendering, 'a graven image, *even* a molten image;' i. e. an image in the first place graven or sculptured, and then molten, or spread over with a layer of silver. The latter we think the preferable sense, especially as in ch. 18. 30, 31, mention is made only of the graven image, and in the final clause of v. 4, of this chapter, it is said in the original, 'And *it was* in the house of Micah,' though in our version arbitrarily and erroneously rendered, 'And *they were* in the house.' It will be remarked, moreover, that she appropriated only two hundred out of the eleven hundred shekels to this purpose, which would hardly have been sufficient for the construction of even one image of any size; whereas if the silver were employed in plating or gilding, the quantity would have been ample for a good sized statue. The remaining nine hundred shekels were probably laid out in the procurement of various other articles necessary to complete their sacred apparatus, particularly the ephod and teraphim.

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[a] Gen. 14. 19. Ruth 3. 10.

[b] See Ex. 20. 4, 23. Lev. 19. 4.

[c]took two hundred *shekels* of silver, and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image: and they were in the house of Micah.

5 And the man Micah had an house of gods, and made an [d]ephod and [e]teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest.

6 [f]In those days *there was* no king in Israel, [g]*but* every man did *that which was* right in his own eyes.

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[c] Isa. 46. 6.

[d] ch. 8. 27. [e] Gen. 31. 19, 30. Hos. 3. 4. Ex. 29. 9. 1 Kings 13. 33. [f] ch. 18. 1, and 19. 1, and 21. 25. Deut. 33. 5. [g] Deut. 12. 8.

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4. *Yet he restored the money.* Heb. וישב את הכסף *vayyâshev eth hakkeseph, and he restored the money.* This should rather be rendered, 'So he restored the money.' The particle 'yet' has an adversative import, and implies something said or done in contrariety to another thing which had happened before; and in this place it would convey this sense: 'Notwithstanding what she said to him, yet he returned the money.' But he had returned the money before she spake to him last, and therefore there is no contrariety to be supposed. 'So,' on the other hand, is confirmative by repetition of what has been said. 'So,' that is, 'as it was before observed, he returned the money.' The conjunction ו, here translated 'yet,' often signifies 'so,' and is thus rightly rendered, as v. 10 of this chapter, and v. 21 of the next.

5. *And the man Micah had an house of gods.* Heb. האיש מיכה לו בית אלהים *vehâish Mikâh lo bêth Elohim, and as to the man Micah, there was to him a house of God,*' as the closing phrase may be rendered. It is spoken of as the *result* of the whole transaction; q. d. 'Thus they managed the matter, and lo! the *man*, the humble individual, Micah, became possessed of a house of God, a sanctuary!' implying not that it was really such, but that it was such in his estimation. The words convey a latent touch of sarcasm or irony, and ought properly to constitute a period by themselves; the next clause would then begin with the repetition of the person, 'and *he* made,' &c., i. e. procured to be made. Of the Ephod, see on Ex. 28. 4; of the Teraphim, on Gen. 21. 19, 30; and of the import of the Heb. word for 'consecrate,' Ex. 29. 9, 41; Lev. 7. 37.

6. *In those days* there was *no king in Israel*, &c. Intimating the reason to which it was owing that such gross enormities as those here mentioned should have occurred. There was no king, judge, or controlling power to take cognizance of them; no one to give orders for destroying the images; no one to convince Micah of his error and guilt in making them, or to punish his offence; no one, in fine, to arrest in the outset an evil which was likely to spread and infect the whole nation. 'Every man did that which was right in his own eyes, and then they soon did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord.' *Henry.*——¶ *Did* that which was *right in his own eyes.* The original term ישר *yashar*, is the same as that applied by Samson, ch. 13. 3, to the Philistine woman whom he urged his parents to procure for him, 'She is *right* in my eyes,' on which see note.

7 ¶ And there was a young man out of [h]Beth-lehem-judah of the family of Judah, who *was* a Levite, and he sojourned there.

8 And the man departed out of the city from Beth-lehem-judah, to sojourn where he could find *a place;* and he came to mount Ephraim to the house of Micah, as he journeyed.

9 And Micah said unto him, Whence comest thou? And he said unto him, I *am* a Levite of Beth-lehem-judah, and I go to sojourn where I may find *a place.*

10 And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, [i]and be unto me a [k]father and a priest, and I will give thee ten *shekels* of silver by the year, and a suit of

[h] See Josh. 19. 15. ch. 19. 1. Ruth 1. 1, 2. Mic. 5. 2. Matt. 2. 1, 5, 6.

[i] ch. 18. 19. [k] Gen. 45. 8. Job 29. 16.

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7. *A young man of Beth-lehem-Judah.* So called to distinguish it from another Bethlehem in the tribe of Zebulun. Josh. 19. 15.——¶ *Of the family of Judah.* This is doubtless to be understood, not of the young man, but of the city. He was of that city Bethlehem which pertained to the family (i. e. tribe) of Judah, thus distinguishing the place with still greater accuracy. Otherwise the words are scarcely intelligible; for how could a Levite be at the same time of the family of Judah?——¶ *And he sojourned there.* Sojourned rather than permanently dwelt; for Bethlehem was not a Levitical city, and therefore not the appropriate residence of one of the priestly tribe. But it is probable that a good deal of liberty was allowed in this respect, and that especially in times of general laxness and confusion, the Levites were dispersed in a very irregular manner over every part of the land.

8. *And the man departed,* &c. Prompted either by fancied necessity from the difficulty of obtaining a livelihood, or by the impulse of a roving mind; or rather perhaps from the influence of both these causes combined. The times were undoubtedly sadly degenerate, and the whole Levitical order reduced to straits, yet it is scarcely conceivable that a Levite, for whom the law had made such express provision, Deut. 12, 19, saying, 'Take heed to thyself that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest upon the earth,' should actually have been *forced* to wander for a maintenance. It was probably rather owing to a native waywardness of disposition. Nor is there any thing related of this individual calculated to shield him from such an imputation.——¶ *He came to —the house of Micah as he journeyed.* Heb. לעשות דרכו *laasoth darko, to make his way.* That is, without the design of tarrying. He merely 'turned aside as a wayfaring man to tarry for a night,' and contrary to his expectation found an opening of which he rashly concluded to avail himself.

10. *Be unto me a father and a priest.* That is, be unto me *a father even a priest*, a spiritual father, a teacher, guide, or overseer in religious things; in which sense the word 'father' repeatedly occurs in the sacred writers. See 2 Kings 6. 21; 8. 9; 13. 4; Is. 22. 21. 'He pretends reverence and submission to him, and what is wanting in wages, he pays him in empty titles.' *Poole.*——¶ *A suit of apparel.* Heb. ערך בגדים *ērek begâdim, an*

apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in.

11 And the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man was unto him as one of his sons,

12 And Micah [l] consecrated the Levite; and the young man [m] became his priest, and was in the house of Micah.

13 Then said Micah, Now know I that the LORD will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to *my* priest.

[l] ver. 5.

[m] ch. 18. 30.

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*order of garments;* Cocceius, 'a fitting out of garments,' i. e. such as would be suitable to wear on ordinary occasions, and such as he should need in his official ministrations.——¶ *So the Levite went in.* By no means the exact import of the original, which is וילך *vayëlek, and he went* or *walked*, whereas the appropriate term for 'went in' is ויבא *vayâbo.* They were doubtless already *in* the house, when the bargain was concluded. Either the sense given to the words by Jarchi, 'And he *went after his counsels,*' i. e. Micah's; or that assigned by Kimchi, 'And he *went about the duties of his office,*' comes undoubtedly much nearer the scope of the writer. For the use of 'walk' in the sense of *ministerial service*, see 1 Sam. 2. 30, 35; and also note on Gen. 5. 22.

11. *The Levite was content to dwell.* The original implies a *peculiar complacency* in dwelling with his employer. Being kindly treated and receiving respectable wages for the times, he thought himself happy in lighting upon so eligible a situation.

12. *Consecrated the Levite.* Heb. ימלא את יד *yemallë eth yad, filled his hand;* furnished him with the proper offering which he was to present on his inauguration. The act, however, was wholly unlawful. Micah had no right even to *undertake* to set apart a person to the priestly office, nor had the Levite any right to think of accepting such a dignity, even had the occasion been lawful, for it appears from ch. 18. 30, that this young man, whose name was Jonathan, was not of Aaron's family, but the son of Gershom, another branch of the same tribe.

13. *Now know I that the Lord will do me good, seeing*, &c. Having provided an epitome of the tabernacle, with models of its various furniture, such as the ark, the mercy-seat, the cherubim, &c., and having procured the proper sacerdotal vestments, with a Levite to wear them and officiate, he takes it for granted that all will now be well, and that he may confidently expect the divine blessing. His delusion in this was very gross, and yet how strikingly does it represent the false confidences of ungodly men in every age. The fact of his having put away his son from the priesthood of his establishment, and appointed one of the Levitical order, seems to have banished all his doubts and fears as to the issue, though his graven image still remained. In like manner, thousands flatter themselves that a partial reformation of conduct, or the correction of a single fault, will atone for persisting in multitudes of others, and that a decent observance of the *prescribed forms* of religion will answer in the place of spirituality of mind and real purity

## CHAPTER XVIII.

IN [a] those days *there was* no king in Israel: and in those days [b] the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that day *all their* inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel.

2 And the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their coasts, men of valor, from [c] Zorah, and from Eshtaol, [d] to spy out the land, and to search it; and they said unto them, Go, search the land: who when they came to mount Ephraim, to the [e] house of Micah, they lodged there.

[a] ch. 17. 6, and 21. 25. [b] Josh. 19. 47.

[c] ch. 13. 25. [d] Num. 13. 17. Josh. 2. 1 [e] ch. 17. 1.

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of heart. Though they retain their idols, they will still cleave to their altar and priest, and, serving God *according to such rules as they have laid down for themselves,* have no fears but that all will be well with them both in this world and the next. And yet how often is it the case, that the very deeds of self-righteousness, in which they rely as commending them to God's favor, are precisely the ones which he most abhors, and which most effectually incur his wrath? Let us then renounce every vain confidence. Let us not promise ourselves exemption from ill on the mere ground of external privileges, or sacred relations. The Jews could boast of having Abraham to their father, and the temple of God for their place of worship, and esteem this a sufficient ground of hope, though living in constant violation of every known duty. Thus too it is certain that many from the fact of being born of pious parents, dwelling in praying families, enjoying a valuable ministry, and being associated with the excellent of the earth, build a hope that all will be well with them, though they are heedless of cultivating the graces of the Spirit, and of laying hold of eternal life. All such fancied security is but exemplifying the infatuation of Micah when he said, 'Now know I that the Lord will do me good, seeing that I have a Levite to my priest.'

## CHAPTER XVIII.

1. *In those days* there was *no king in Israel.* That is, about the time mentioned in the preceding chapter, and not long after the death of Joshua.——¶ *The tribe of the Danites.* Not the whole, but a part of this tribe, some families of it, to the number of six hundred men of war with their households, v. 16, 21.——¶ *Unto that day* all their *inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel.* Not but that the tribe of Dan had had an inheritance assigned to them as well as the other tribes, Josh. 19. 40, but up to this time they were not in the *actual enjoyment* of their possession. In consequence of their culpable remissness in expelling the old inhabitants, they lost the advantages they might otherwise have gained over them, and not only so, but as appears from Josh. 19. 47, (where see note) a part of their territories had actually been wrested out of their hands, leaving them so straitened for room, that a portion of the tribe was induced to migrate to a distant section of the land in quest of

3 When they *were* by the house of Micah, they knew the voice of the young man the Levite: and they turned in thither, and said unto him, Who brought thee hither? and what makest thou in this *place?* and what hast thou here?

4 And he said unto them, Thus and thus dealeth Micah with me, and hath [f] hired me, and I am his priest.

5 And they said unto him [g] Ask counsel, we pray thee, [h] of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous.

6 And the priest said unto them, [i] Go in peace: before the LORD *is* your way wherein ye go.

ampler accommodations. See a brief account of this, Josh. 19. 47.

2. *Men of valor.* Heb. בני חיל *benë 'hayil, sons of valor.*——¶ *They lodged there.* Not *in* the house, but *by* it, as is evident from the next verse.

3. *Knew the voice of the young man.* Either recognised him in this way as an old acquaintance, or perceived by his dialect, his mode of pronunciation, that although now residing at mount Ephraim he was yet of a different stock; for we have already seen that the Ephraimites had a pronunciation peculiar to themselves. ch. 12. 6.——¶ *What makest thou?* Rather, what doest thou.——¶ *What hast thou here?* Hast thou a family with thee, and what are thy means of subsistence?

5. *Ask counsel, I pray thee, of God.* We see from this circumstance how deep was the degeneracy of the times. Had these men of Dan possessed the spirit of true Israelites, they would have been indignant to learn that a rival sanctuary to that of Shiloh had been set up, and that a renegade Levite had sacrilegiously assumed the functions of the sacred office. But the circumstance, instead of giving rise to censure or remonstrance, seems rather to have ministered occasion for drawing out the latent idolatrous propensities of their own hearts. Probably, conscious of having neglected at the outset of their expedition to consult the Most High and implore his blessing, they determined to avail themselves of the professed oracle at hand, and learn from the Teraphim what they ought to have learned from the Urim. So much more prone is man's depraved nature to idolatrous superstition than to real piety.——¶ *Whether our way which we go,* &c. Whether our enterprise which we have undertaken shall succeed. On this import of the word 'way,' as including not the journey only, but everything pertaining it, see on ch. 4. 9.

6. *Go in peace.* That is, go and prosper. This being strictly no more than the expression of a *friendly wish,* did not commit his foresight as a prophet.——¶ *Your way is before the Lord.* An ambiguous expression, capable of being interpreted, according to the event, either in a good or bad sense, and thus bearing the equivocal character of the responses of all the ancient heathen oracles. Its prevailing sense in the Scriptures is undoubtedly that of *approbation* on the part of God, and so in the present case he intended it should be

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f ch. 17. 10.

g 1 Kings 22. 5. Isa. 30. 1. Hos. 4. 12.
h See ch. 17. 5, and ver. 14. i 1 Kings 22. 6.

7 ¶ Then the five men departed, and came to [k] Laish, and saw the people that *were* therein, [l] how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure; and *there was* no magistrate in the land, that might put *them* to shame in *any* thing; and they *were* far from the Zidonians, and had no business with *any* man.

k Josh. 19. 47, called Leshem. l ver. 27-8.

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understood. Yet it has not exclusively this import. When rigidly weighed it amounts only to the general truth elsewhere affirmed, that 'The ways of man are *before the eyes of the Lord*, and he pondereth all his goings.' If, therefore, the event should be propitious, he would of course gain the credit of a true prophet, whereas if it were adverse, he would at once take shelter under the ambiguity of the expression. While we recognise the subtlety of Satan in this reply, we may still gather from the incident the importance of bespeaking the divine direction and blessing at the outset of all our ways. We may go comfortably and cheerfully forward in them, if they are only such as he approves. His smile is success, his frown disaster.

7. *Came to Laish.* Made sanguine and confident by the Levite's prediction, they set forward on their journey and came to Laish, or Leshem, as it is called by Joshua, 19. 47, and afterwards Dan. v. 29. The inhabitants of this place are supposed to have been a colony of the Zidonians, or Sidonians, at a very considerable distance from the parent country.——¶ *Dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians.* The habitual security of the Zidonians probably arose mainly from their position and pursuits. They lived in a flourishing sea-port town and were chiefly addicted to commerce, and not being included in the seven devoted nations of Canaan, they probably gave themselves but little concern about the wars and conquests that were going on around them. In this respect the people of Laish resembled them. Conscious of no ill design themselves, and free from the apprehension of being molested by others, they dwelt at ease in their rich and fertile valley, v. 28, their gates left open, and their walls neglected. But the grasping cupidity of man leaves nothing secure on earth, and the peaceful abodes of rural life are often visited by calamities that populous cities and the crowded marts of commerce would have more reason to dread.——¶ *No magistrate in the land*, &c. Heb. ארן יורש עצר *ën yorësh ëtzer*, *no heir*, *or possessor of restraint.* It is not absolutely certain that what is here said of the people of Laish is to be understood by way of reproach, as the original, 'heir of restraint,' may simply mean that there was no *hereditary government* exercised among them, but that they lived under a free republic, and yet so peaceably and harmoniously that there was no one disposed to 'shame,' i. e. to injure, to vex, to put indignity upon his neighbor or fellow citizen. And all this may be stated as mere matter of fact respecting their political condition, and perhaps with the design of intimating the cruelty of the Danites in barbarously invading and putting to the sword such an inoffensive community. At the same

8 And they came unto their brethren to [m] Zorah and Eshtaol: and their brethren said unto them, What *say* ye?

9 And they said, [n] Arise, that we may go up against them: for we have seen the land, and behold, it *is* very good: and *are* ye [o] still? be not slothful to go, *and* to enter to possess the land.

10 When ye go, ye shall come unto a people [p] secure, and to a large land: for God hath given it into your hands; [q] a place where *there is* no want of any thing that *is* in the earth.

11 ¶ And there went from thence of the family of the Danites, out of Zorah and out of Eshtaol, six hundred men appointed with weapons of war.

12 And they went up, and pitched in [r] Kirjath-jearim, in Judah: wherefore they called that place [s] Mahaneh-dan unto

[m] ver. 2. [n] Num. 13. 30. Josh. 2. 23, 24. [o] 1 Kings 22. 3. [p] ver. 7, 27.

[q] Deut. 8. 9. [r] Josh. 15. 60. [s] ch. 13. 25.

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time, the evidence in favor of the common interpretation, which makes the words to convey a reflection upon the *lawless* and *dissolute* state of things among them, is perhaps still stronger, and we incline to abide by it.——¶ Were *far from the Zidonians.* Consequently far from succor in case of a sudden attack.——¶ *Had no business with* any *man.* No treaties of alliance, no commercial intercourse, no established connection of any kind. Depending upon their own resources, and feeling little need of foreign luxuries, they lived in an insulated state in respect to the rest of the world. The words, *of themselves*, convey no impeachment of their character on the score of industry or activity, and yet taken in connexion with the whole passage, they may perhaps warrant the inference drawn from them by most commentators, that the Laishites were an indolent and idle people. Still a positive affirmation cannot be built upon the premises.

9. Are *ye still?* Heb. מחשים *ma'hshim, silent*, i. e. inactive. On the peculiar use of Heb. terms for 'silence,' see on Josh. 10. 12. The spirit of this report may be applied to a higher theme. Heaven is a good land, made sure by promise to all believers, and if we have a heart to travel thither, boldly facing the dangers in the way, we shall find every want supplied for ever. Yet so insidious and powerful an enemy is sloth to the soul in its journey heavenward, that we have need to exhort one another daily to arise and be doing. No one knows how much comfort he loses here, or how much glory hereafter, by sinful negligence.

10. *Where* there is *no want of any thing that* is *in the earth.* Probably the more correct rendering is, 'in the land,' i. e. the land of Canaan. No part of the land of promise held out greater advantages; none was on any account more eligible. This is the usual sense of the original.

11. *Of the family of the Danites.* Meaning of the *tribe* of the Danites; the aggregate of the families; collect. sing. for plur. as often before.——¶ *Appointed with weapons of war.* Heb. הגור *'hâgūr girded.*

12. *Pitched in Kirjath-jearim.* Not in the city itself, but in its immediate vicinity, as is clear from the final clause. See on Josh. 10. 10.——

this day: behold, *it is* behind Kirjath-jearim.

13 And they passed thence unto mount Ephraim, and came unto [t] the house of Micah.

14 ¶ [u] Then answered the five men that went to spy out the country of Laish, and said unto their brethren, Do ye know that [x] there is in these houses an ephod, and teraphim, and a graven image, and a molten image? now therefore consider what ye have to do.

15 And they turned thitherward, and came to the house of the young man the Levite, *even* unto the house of Micah, and saluted him.

16 And the [y] six hundred men appointed with their weapons of war, which *were* of the children of Dan, stood by the entering of the gate.

17 And [z] the five men that went to spy out the land went up, *and* came in thither, *and* took [a] the graven image, and the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image: and the priest stood in the entering of the gate with the six hundred men *that were* appointed with weapons of war.

[t] ver. 2. [u] 1 Sam. 14. 28. [x] ch. 17. 5.

[y] ver. 11. [z] ver. 2. 14. [a] ch. 17. 4, 5.

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¶ *Mahaneh-dan.* That is, 'the camp of Dan,' so called from the circumstance of this expedition *encamping* there. By comparing ch. 13. 25, it appears quite obvious that this transaction occurred previous to the days of Samson.——¶ *Behind Kirjath-jearim.* Westward of Kirjath-jearim; for as the face is always supposed to be turned to the east when the sacred writers speak of the points of the compass, the west of course falls behind one. Thus Deut. 11. 24, the Mediterranean, or *western* sea, is called the *hindermost sea* (הים האחרון *hayom ha'haron,*) as the east, on the other hand, is designated by a term (קדם *kedem*) which has the sense of *before* or *anterior.*

14. *Then answered.* Then spake. An idiom both of the Hebrew and the Greek, by which this word is used for *addressed, accosted.* See 1 Kings 1. 28; Ezra 10. 2; Is. 14. 10.——¶ *Consider what ye have to do.* Consider what ye *shall* do; it is a point worth deliberating whether this priest and his oracle, of the truth of whose responses we have had experience, will not be a valuable acquisition to us in our new settlement. Their subsequent actions are the best commentary on these words.

15. *And saluted him.* Heb. וישאלו לו לשלום *yishalu lo lishâlom, asked him of peace;* i. e. inquired respecting his welfare, which is usually expressed by the term *peace.* See Gen. 43. 27; Ex. 18. 7.

17. *The five men—came in thither.* Entered into what might be called the sanctuary, the chapel, of Micah's house. From its being said that they 'went up' (ויעלו *yaalu,*) for this purpose, Rosenmüller conjectures that it was an *upper* apartment, and adduces Dan. 6. 10, in confirmation.——¶ *The priest stood in the entering of the gate.* Where the other party no doubt detained and held him in talk, while their comrades effected the abduction of the gods with all their appurtenances. 'See what little care this sorry priest took of his gods;

18 And these went into Micah's house, and fetched the carved image, the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image. Then said the priest unto them, What do ye?

19 And they said unto him, Hold thy peace, [b] lay thine hand upon thy mouth, and go with us, [c] and be to us a father and a priest: *is it* better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel?

20 And the priest's heart was glad, and he took the ephod, and the teraphim, and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people.

21 So they turned and departed, and put the little ones, and the cattle, and the carriage before them.

22 ¶ *And* when they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men that *were* in the houses nearer to Micah's house were gathered together, and overtook the children of Dan.

23 And they cried unto the children of Dan. And they

while he was sauntering at the gate, his treasure (such as it was) was gone. See how impotent these wretched gods were, that could not keep themselves from being stolen.' *Henry.* The whole scene, including the conduct of all parties, is a singular mixture of the impious and the ludicrous.

18. *These went into Micah's house.* The five men mentioned above went in, while the six hundred armed men stood at the gate.

19. *Lay thy hand upon thy mouth.* A well known token of silence among all nations. Comp. Job 21. 5; Prov. 30. 32.

19. *That thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel.* That is, 'to a tribe, *even* a collection of families.' From the narrated facts of the case it is evident that a whole tribe could not have been intended.

20. *The priest's heart was glad.* Swayed wholly by self-interest and unmindful of the claims of gratitude and of truth, he forsakes his former employer merely from the motives of covetousness and ambition. But who can be surprised to find him false and treacherous to men who has been convicted of the grossest perfidy towards God?——¶ *Went in the midst of the people.* Or, Heb. 'went into the midst of the people.' Took his place in the centre of the company, both to secure him from the pursuit of Micah, and in imitation of the order of Israel's march through the wilderness, in which the ark and the priests moved in the middle of the host.

21. *The carriage before them.* Heb. כבודה *kebudah, the weight,* i. e. the luggage or baggage, the various moveables which a body of emigrants would naturally carry with them. No allusion whatever is had to *wheel-carriages,* as these vehicles, even to this day, are entirely unknown as a means of travelling in that country. The arrangement here mentioned was a precautionary measure designed to guard against the consequences of an attack on the part of Micah, which, should he see

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[b] Job 21. 5, and 29. 9, and 40. 4. Prov. 30. 32. Mic. 7. 16. [c] ch. 17. 10.

turned their faces, and said unto Micah, What aileth thee, that thou comest with such a company?

24 And he said, Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and ye are gone away: and what have I more? and what *is* this *that* ye say unto me, What aileth thee?

25 And the children of Dan said unto him, Let not thy voice be heard among us, lest angry fellows run upon thee, and thou lose thy life, with the lives of thy household.

26 And the children of Dan went their way: and when Micah saw that they *were* too strong for him, he turned and went back unto his house.

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fit to make one, would naturally be upon the rear.

23. *What aileth thee, that thou comest with such a company?* Heb. מה לך כי נזעקת *mah lekâ ki nizoktâ*, *what to thee, that thou art gathered together?* An individual of course could not be said to be 'gathered together;' but the Heb. idiom by which the leader or head of a multitude is put for the multitude itself, is of very frequent occurrence. See Note on Gen. 14. 15.

24. *Ye have taken away my gods, which I made*, &c. That is, the whole apparatus of my images, teraphim, &c., made as *representatives* of divine things, and symbols of the divine presence. With all his gross superstition, it is not conceivable that a native Israelite should have become at this time so besotted by his idolatrous propensities as to suppose that the fabrication of his own hands was really the great Jehovah that made heaven and earth.——¶ *What have I more?* What have you left me worth having compared with the image and the priest of which you have so perfidiously deprived me? Such ardent, but infatuated and wicked zeal could Micah evince in respect to the objects of his idolatry. How many that bear the name of Christians are shamed by such an instance of deep but guilty devotion? How lightly do they bear the loss or the absence of the most precious spiritual privileges compared with that of their worldly possessions? It is when they are bereft of *these*, and not of the light of God's countenance and the hidden joys of the Spirit, that they exclaim, What have I more?

25. *Lest angry fellows.* Heb. אנשים מרי נפש *anâshim mârë nephesh*, *men bitter of spirit.* The genuine language of lawless banditti, who answer the plea of *right*, with no other argument than the exhibition of superior *might.* By this we are reminded, (1) That they who dare to commit theft will be easily induced, if needful to secure their ill-gotten spoil, to commit murder also. (2) That where power is with unprincipled oppressors, to complain of injustice is often only to provoke farther injury.

26. *He turned and went back unto his house.* It is to be hoped, a wiser and better man; having now had experimental proof of the vanity of the idols with which he is compelled to part. But whatever the event may have taught *him*, it is pregnant with instruction to *us.* In the straits to which Micah was driven, we perceive

27 And they took *the things* which Micah had made, and the priest which he had, and [d] came unto Laish, unto a people *that were* at quiet and secure: [e] and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire.

28 And *there was* no deliverer, because it *was* [f] far from Zidon, and they had no business with *any* man; and it was in the valley that *lieth* [g] by Beth-rehob. And they built a city, and dwelt therein.

29 And [h] they called the name of the city [i] Dan, after the name

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[d] ver. 7, 10. Deut. 33. 22. [e] Josh. 19. 47.

[f] ver. 7. [g] Num. 13. 21. 2 Sam. 10. 6. [h] Josh. 19. 47. [i] Gen. 14. 14. ch. 20. 1. 1 Kings 12. 29, 30, and 15. 20.

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a striking illustration of the issue of the fatal delusions of ungodly men. Their false confidences will be abolished, their refuges of lies all swept away. The religion in which they now so sanguinely trust will be proved a baseless fabric. No foundation will then stand but that which God himself has laid, nor will any superstructure endure but that which is able to abide a fiery ordeal. The law which they were disposed to reduce to their own standard will then be found to be immutable, and the religion of the Bible, which *in its true sense* they have rejected, the only means of a sinner's acceptance with God. Their forced interpretations of the sacred text, and their self-complacent schemes of salvation will avail them nothing. As a necessary consequence, their destitution and misery will then be complete. 'Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I left?' may then be considered as the bitter lamentation of every deluded soul. In vain now is the ready plea, 'I thought I was right.' Why did they rest in vain conjectures? Why did they presume to substitute a system of their own in place of that which God had revealed? Why would they not submit to be saved in God's own way? Alas! it is now too late to rectify their error. They have gone down to darkness, 'leaning on a lie.' They have walked in the light of the sparks which they themselves have kindled, and as a recompense in the same, they lie down in sorrow. Let us away then with all systems of man's device in the great matter of salvation. Let us at once and cordially embrace the whole true gospel of the grace of God, and we have a portion of which we can never be robbed. Who can spoil us of our God? or what can we want if we have him for our friend?

27. *Came unto Laish, unto a people*, &c. Rather, came *upon* Laish, (עַל *al*, not אֶל *el.*) *upon* a people; i. e. in a hostile manner, making a fierce attack upon them.——¶ *Burnt the city with fire.* That is, probably, a part of it, not the whole; as the phrase clearly implies elsewhere. See on Josh. 8. 8. This measure was doubtless adopted to strike a greater terror into the inhabitants, and to make their conquest more secure.

28. *And they built a city.* Heb. ויבנו את העיר *vayibnu eth hâir, and they built* the *city;* i. e. rebuilt it; or at least so much of it as was destroyed by the fire.

29. *Called the name of the city Dan.* To be a witness for them that they

of Dan their father, who was born unto Israel: howbeit the name of the city *was* Laish at the first.

30 ¶ And the children of Dan set up the graven image: and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his

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were Danites by birth, though removed to so great a distance from their brethren. As this fact might possibly in after times be called in question, they would make the very name of their place a ground on which to establish their claim to relationship. 'We should be concerned not to lose the privilege of our relation to God's Israel, and therefore should take all occasions to own it, and preserve the remembrance of it to ours after us.' *Henry.* This city became afterwards very remarkable as one of the *extremities* of the promised land. The extent of the Israelitish territory from its northern to its southern border was generally expressed by the phrase, 'From Dan to Beersheba.'

30. *The children of Dan set up the graven image.* Thus was idolatry first publicly established in Israel. It began in the tribe and city of Dan, from which it gradually spread like an evil contagion, and though checked from time to time by pious rulers, yet it eventually infected nearly the whole nation. As a mark of the divine indignation towards the prime agents of this wickedness, Lightfoot suggests that in the mystical sealing of the tribes mentioned Rev. 7, that of Dan is entirely omitted. It may also be supposed that having had the precedent now set, Jeroboam was encouraged afterwards to establish the idolatrous worship of one of his golden calves at this very place —— ¶ *Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh.* It is conjectured by many expositors that instead of Manasseh, (מנשה) the true reading is Moses, (משה) which differs, it will be perceived, only by a single letter; and this letter (נ), it is supposed the Jews have interpolated in order to save the credit of their great lawgiver and prophet. The singular name of Gershom, the name of one of Moses' sons, and the date of the transaction, concur, it is said, in establishing this view. Accordingly the Vulgate and some copies of the Septuagint actually exhibit the name of 'Moses,' instead of 'Manasseh.' The interpolation, however, has been very timidly executed. The letter נ was originally placed above the line of the other letters (as it now appears in the printed Hebrew Bibles,) as if rather to suggest, than to make an alteration; but in process of time the letter sunk down into the body of the word. The Hebrew writers themselves admit this; and say that the intention was to veil this disgrace in the house of Moses, by suggesting a *figurative* descent of Jonathan from Manasseh, the idolatrous king of Judah *who lived about eight hundred years afterwards!* Bp. Patrick and others are disposed to rank this among the idle conceits of the Jewish critics, but for ourselves, without positively adopting the opinion, we think it by no means improbable. The most excellent characters are often but badly represented by their descendants. Children are not always the crown of old men, any more than fathers are always the glory of

sons were priests to the tribe of Dan [k] until the day of the captivity of the land.

31 And they set them up Micah's graven image which he made, [l] all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.

## CHAPTER XIX.

AND it came to pass in those days, [a] when *there was* no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite sojourning on the side of mount Ephraim, who took to him a concubine out of [b] Beth-lehem-judah.

2 And his concubine played the whore against him, and went away from him unto her father's house to Beth-lehem-judah, and was there four whole months.

3 And her husband arose, and went after her, to speak friendly unto her, *and* to bring her again, having his servant with him, and a couple of asses: and she brought him into her father's house: and when the father of the damsel saw him, he rejoiced to meet him.

[k] ch. 13. 1. 1 Sam. 4. 2, 3, 10, 11. Ps. 78. 60, 61. [l] Josh. 18. 1. ch. 19. 18, and 21. 12. [a] ch. 17. 6, and 18. 1, and 21. 25.

[b] ch. 17. 7.

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their children. The point, however, is one of little importance.——¶ *Until the day of the captivity of the land.* Probably the captivity of the ten tribes by Shalmaneser king of Assyria. If so, this passage is to be considered as an addition made by a later hand, of which there are numerous acknowledged instances in the books of the Old Testament.

31. *All the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.* Not that its continuance there was *limited* to the period now specified, as this would be inconsistent with what is affirmed in the preceding verse; but it seems to be stated as a remarkable and discreditable fact, that even during all the time that the true tabernacle and altar were standing at Shiloh, and notwithstanding the reforming efforts of all the Judges, yet here was a rival establishment of an idolatrous character subsisting in the face of all the injunctions made against it! Probably the remote situation of Dan, on the extreme borders of the country, put it in a measure out of the reach of those influences which would otherwise have gone to extirpate the abominations which it cherished.

## CHAPTER XIX.

1. *And it came to pass*, &c. The tragical tale that follows seems to be inserted here in order to afford a melancholy illustration of the disorders which sprung from the lack of due restraint. In the absence of an efficient magistracy, confusion and every evil work prevailed.——¶ *Took to him a concubine.* Heb. אישה פילגש *ishâh pilëgesh, a woman, a concubine*, or *a wife, a concubine;* or, as Geddes renders it, *a concubine-wife;* i. e. a lawful but a secondary wife; as in v. 3, he is expressly called her 'husband,' and v. 4 her father his father-in-law. Such connexions were not disreputable in those times, being tolerated in the law and countenanced by the practice of the best of men. It is a great mistake to conceive of a concubine as a harlot.

3. *To speak friendly unto her.* Heb.

4 And his father-in-law, the damsel's father, retained him; and he abode with him three days: so they did eat and drink, and lodged there.

5 ¶ And it came to pass on the fourth day, when they arose early in the morning, that he rose up to depart: and the damsel's father said unto his son-in-law, [c]Comfort thy heart with a morsel of bread, and afterward go your way.

6 And they sat down, and did eat and drink both of them together: for the damsel's father had said unto the man, Be content, I pray thee, and tarry all night, and let thine heart be merry.

7 And when the man rose up to depart, his father-in-law urged him: therefore he lodged there again.

8 And he arose early in the morning on the fifth day to depart: and the damsel's father said, Comfort thy heart, I pray thee. And they tarried until afternoon, and they did eat both of them.

9 And when the man rose up to depart, he, and his concubine,

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[c] Gen. 18. 5.

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לדבר על לבה *ledabbër al libbâh, to speak to her heart;* that is, to conciliate her affection, to rekindle her tenderness, and to entreat her to return to the home she had left cheerless. Comp. Gen 34. 3; 50. 21; Ruth 2. 13. The phrase is commonly applied to speaking comfortably to one that is in distress or sorrow, and may perhaps here imply that the woman was penitent and grieved for her offences.——¶ *Rejoiced to meet him.* Hoping that now a complete reconciliation would be effected between his daughter and her husband.

4. *And lodged there.* That is, the Levite and his servant. It would scarcely be said of the father-in-law that he lodged in his own house.

5. *Comfort thine heart with a morsel of bread.* Heb. סעד לבך *seod libbekâ, strengthen thine heart;* i. e. refresh thy spirits.

8. *They tarried until afternoon.* Heb. עד נטות היום *ad netoth hayom, till the day declined.* The original for 'tarried' (התמהמהו *hithmahemëhu,*) implies a *reluctant delay, a forced compliance with urgent solicitations,* and the issue of the affair teaches us very impressively the danger, as well as the weakness of suffering ourselves to be overcome by pressing importunity against the convictions of our better judgment. The hospitable entertainment and agreeable society of friends is indeed a strong inducement to protract a visit, but no man should forget that he has calls at home of paramount claim, and that there is a limit beyond which complaisance is at war with duty, and where we should turn a deaf ear to the most urgent requests. The warm-hearted and friendly entertainer, too, should remember that his intended kindness when too far urged may prove a real injury to its objects, and should therefore moderate its promptings by reason and religion. It is altogether probable that the fearful calamity which overtook this unfortunate couple would have been avoided had they been less urged, or, when urged, had they acted with more decision.

and his servant, his father-in-law, the damsel's father, said unto him, Behold, now the day draweth toward evening, I pray you tarry all night: behold, the day groweth to an end, lodge here, that thine heart may be merry; and to-morrow get you early on your way, that thou mayest go home.

10 But the man would not tarry that night, but he rose up and departed, and came over against [d]Jebus, which *is* Jerusalem: and *there were* with him two asses saddled, his concubine also *was* with him.

11 *And* when they *were* by Jebus, the day was far spent; and the servant said unto his master, Come, I pray thee, and let us turn in into this city [e]of the Jebusites, and lodge in it.

12 And his master said unto him, We will not turn aside hither into the city of a stranger, that *is* not of the children of Israel; we will pass over [f]to Gibeah.

13 And he said unto his servant, Come, and let us draw near to one of these places to lodge all night, in Gibeah, or in [g]Ramah.

14 And they passed on and went their way; and the sun went down upon them *when they were* by Gibeah, which *belongeth* to Benjamin.

15 And they turned aside thither, to go in *and* to lodge in

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[d] Josh. 18. 28.

[e] Josh. 15. 8, 63. ch. 1. 21. 2 Sam. 5. 6.

[f] Josh. 18. 28.

[g] Josh. 18. 25.

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9. *The day draweth towards evening.* Heb. רפה היום *raphâh hayom*, *the day is weak, is become relaxed, remitteth itself.* The phrase points to a time of day the opposite of what is termed, Gen. 29. 7, 'high day,' i. e. the hour when the heat of the day has attained its utmost intensity, when it has reached the meridian.——¶ *The day groweth to an end.* Heb. חנות היום *'hanoth hayom, it is the pitching time* of day; i. e. it is near the time when travellers ordinarily pitch their tents and take up their lodgings for the night.——¶ *Mayest go home.* Heb. לאה לכה *leohâ lekâh, to thy tent.*

12. *Into the city of a stranger.* That is, of a strange and foreign people; for though the city of Jerusalem had been before taken by Caleb, ch. 1. 8, yet the strong-hold of Zion was still in the hands of the Jebusites, who were not fully dispossessed till the days of David. The event, however, showed that he could scarcely have fared *worse* among the most barbarous hordes of Canaanites than he did among his own brethren. In all probability he would have done better to have followed his servant's advice.

13. *In Gibeah or in Ramah.* These places were both north, or rather north-west from Jerusalem, and distant, the former about four miles, the latter about six.

15. *No man that took them into his house to lodging.* Heb. אין איש מאסף *ën ish measseph, no man gathering.* On the expressive import of this phrase see on Josh. 6. 9. It seems that up to this time no caravansaries or inns, in which travellers now obtain lodgings in the East, existed. At least we have met with no *certain*

Gibeah: and when he went in, he sat him down in a street of the city: for *there was* no man that [h]took them into his house to lodging.

16 ¶ And behold, there came an old man from [i]his work out of the field at even, which *was* also of mount Ephraim; and he sojourned in Gibeah; but the men of the place *were* Benjamites.

17 And when he had lifted up his eyes, he saw a wayfaring man in the street of the city: and the old man said, Whither goest thou? and whence comest thou?

18 And he said unto him, We *are* passing from Beth-lehem-judah toward the side of mount Ephraim; from thence *am* I: and I went to Beth-lehem-judah, but I *am now* going to [k]the house of the LORD; and there *is* no man that receiveth me to house.

19 Yet there is both straw and provender for our asses; and

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[h] Matt. 25. 43. Heb. 13. 2. [i] Ps. 104. 23.

[k] Josh. 18. 1. ch. 18. 31, and 20. 18. 1 Sam. 1. 3, 7.

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traces of the existence of such accommodations. Strangers, therefore, relied entirely on private hospitality for entertainment in the places to which they came, as is still the case in many parts of the East. Under these circumstances such an inhospitable reception as that which the Levite now experienced is of very rare occurrence, and can only be explained on the ground of the pre-eminently vile and abandoned character of the citizens of Gibeah. The general courteousness of the Orientals in this respect is well set forth in the language of Job, 31. 32; 'The stranger did not lodge in the street; but I opened my doors to the traveller.'

16. *There came an old man from his work out of the field at even.* Had all the inhabitants of Gibeah been of the stamp of this good old Israelite, in whom we see such a pleasing specimen of patriarchal times, as he returns at evening from his daily toil, so gross and horrid a deed of wickedness would not have disgraced their city. But it may well be doubted whether he were not the only laborer whom this evening brought home from the field, and as the virtues usually go together, 'he,' as Henry remarks, 'who was honestly diligent in his business all day, was disposed to be generously hospitable to these poor strangers at night.'——¶ *Which was also of mount Ephraim.* 'Gibeah was a second Sodom; even there also is another Lot; which is therefore so much more hospitable to strangers, because himself was a stranger. The host, as well as the Levite, is of mount Ephraim; each man knows best to commiserate that evil in others which himself hath passed through. All that profess the name of Christ are countrymen and yet strangers here below. How cheerfully should we entertain each other, when we meet in the Gibeah of this inhospitable world!' *Bp. Hall.*

18. *No man that receiveth me to house.* Heb. מאסף אותי *measseph othi, that gathereth me;* the same phrase as that above, v. 15.

19. *Both straw and provender,* &c. Intimating that it was not necessary for him to tax the hospitality of any

there is bread and wine also for me, and for thy handmaid, and for the young man *which is* with thy servants: *there is* no want of any thing.

20 And the old man said, [l]Peace *be* with thee; howsoever, *let* all thy wants *lie* upon me; [m]only lodge not in the street.

[l] Gen. 43. 23. ch. 6. 23. [m] Gen. 19. 2.

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one except for lodging. He had abundance of provision of his own, both for himself and his asses. In entering upon a journey, the Orientals lay in a supply of food for the beasts with which they travel as well as for themselves. This food is of different kinds. They make little or no hay in these countries, and are therefore very careful of their straw, which they cut into small bits, with an instrument which at the same time threshes out the corn (grain); this chopped straw, with barley, beans, and balls made of bran and barley meal, or of the pounded kernels of dates, is what they feed them with. 'People (in the East) still carry provisions with them in a journey, even through a peopled country. No one calculates on obtaining, unless in very great towns, more than house-room, with the chance of being able to buy bread and fruit. It is not certain that even bread can be procured, and not to leave the matter entirely to chance, the traveller usually takes from one great town to another, so much bread as will serve him intermediately. If he desires better fare than he is likely thus to obtain, he takes with him cooking utensils, rice, vegetables, preserved meat, butter, &c., and at the resting place for the day has a warm meal prepared by a servant or himself, from his own stores and with his own utensils. We have known a single traveller accompanied by a mule, exclusively laden with his bedding, provisions, and cooking vessels. It is within the writer's own experience, that in a journey of more than a fortnight through a comparatively well-peopled part of Western Asia, it was not possible more than twice (in two great towns) to obtain other food than bread and fruit, and often this not without much difficulty, and sometimes not at all.' *Pict. Bible.*

20, Let *all thy wants* lie *upon me.* This is not inconsistent with the Levite's assertion in the preceding verse, that there was 'no want of any thing.' The original signifies *defect, lack*, and the Levite said, tha although he was supplied with every thing else, yet he did lack a lodging place. His kind entertainer here tells him to dismiss all care, for he would take it upon him to see that his *deficiency in this and every other respect* should be supplied, q. d. Keep your bread and wine, your straw and provender for your own and your asses' use; you may need them before you finish your journey; I will provide for *all* your wants this night; therefore do not think of lodging in the street.' This was generosity worthy of an Israelite.——¶*Lodge not in the street.* Unless they had bedding, which travellers often carry with them, this would not have been convenient; and it would be thought disgraceful to the character of a town, to allow a stranger, accom-

21 [n] So he brought him into his house, and gave provender unto the asses: [o] and they washed their feet, and did eat and drink.

22 ¶ *Now* as they were making their hearts merry, behold, [p] the men of the city, certain [q] sons of Belial, beset the house round about, *and* beat at the door, and spake to the master of the house, the old man, saying, [r] Bring forth the man that came into thine house, that we may know him.

23 And [s] the man, the master of the house, went out unto them, and said unto them, Nay, my brethren, *nay*, I pray you, do not *so* wickedly; seeing that this man is come into mine house, [t] do not this folly.

24 [u] Behold, *here is* my daughter, a maiden, and his concubine; them I will bring out now, and [x] humble ye them, and do with them what seemeth good unto you: but unto this man do not so vile a thing.

25 But the men would not hearken to him: so the man took his concubine, and brought her forth unto them; and they [y] knew her, and abused her all

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n Gen. 24. 32, and 43. 24. o Gen. 18. 4. John 13. 5. p Gen. 19. 4. ch. 20. 5. Hos. 9. 9, and 10. 9. q Deut. 13. 13. r Gen. 19. 5. Rom. 1. 26, 27. s Gen. 19. 6, 7.

t 2 Sam. 13. 12. u Gen. 19. 8. x Gen. 34. 2. Deut. 21. 14. y Gen. 4. 1.

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panied by his wife, to do so even then. But in other respects, lodging in the streets of a town, is a less singular circumstance in the East than it would seem to us in England. 'When the Bedouin Arabs visit a town, they usually prefer sleeping at night in the street to sleeping in a house. So also, when a person walks through the streets of Malta in the nights of summer, he finds the foot-pavements obstructed by beds, occupied by married couples and single people. These belong to shop-keepers and others, who rent the ground-floors, and having no right to take their beds to the roof, bring them out into the street to enjoy the luxury of sleeping in the cool open air.' *Pict. Bible.*

22. *Making their hearts merry.* Refreshing themselves with the provisions set before them. It does not necessarily convey the idea of banqueting and revelry.——¶ *Sons of Belial.* Vile, abandoned, profligate, fellows; men lost to all sense of right, honor, and decency. See Note on Deut. 13. 13.——¶ *Beat at the door.* Rendered 'beat,' in order to imply something more than simply knocking. The original has the import of an earnest, eager, violent, assault of the door.——¶ *Bring forth the man, &c.* This demand, and indeed the whole of the incidents here mentioned, have a striking resemblance to the affair of Lot and the Sodomites. Under the ambiguous term 'know,' these sons of Belial in each instance, convey a sense in the last degree abominable and brutal, and in each instance the father makes a proposal which the extremest case could not justify.

25. *The man took his concubine, and brought her forth.* The conduct of the Levite in this transaction is utterly inexplicable. His going after her to her father's house would indicate

the night until the morning: and when the day began to spring, they let her go.

26 Then came the woman in the dawning of the day, and fell down at the door of the man's house where her lord *was*, till it was light.

27 And her lord rose up in the morning, and opened the doors of the house, and went out to go his way: and behold, the woman his concubine was fallen down *at* the door of the house, and her hands *were* upon the threshold.

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that he still cherished towards her a real affection, and he appears thus far along the journey to have treated her with every kindness. Yet now in the hour of danger, apparently to save his own life, he determines to sacrifice her. He suffered her to be brought out and exposed to these fiends in human shape, while he, it would seem, secure from harm, either sits down or lies down in calm indifference to her fate. We infer this from its not being intimated that he made the least inquiry respecting her during the night, but 'rose up'—(could it be from his bed?)—'in the morning, and opened the doors of the house, and went out to go his way,' as if he did not once think what had become of his unhappy companion, but designed to set forward alone! It would seem that it was only by stumbling upon her lifeless corpse at the door that he was reminded of there being such a person either living or dead. And even admitting that he thought her alive as she lay prostrate on the ground, how unfeeling, how inhuman his address! 'Up, and let us be going.' *Could* he thus rudely accost a tender female, who, for his sake, had submitted through the live-long night to the most savage brutalities, if he possessed the common feelings of a man? Suppose he thought her asleep; yet we ask, would he have felt no emotions of surprise, of grief, of pain, to find her sleeping in *such* a place and in *such* a posture? Would he not anxiously and tenderly have awakened her, and inquired of her welfare? The man's conduct throughout is a riddle, which we know not how to solve. One thing however is certain. When the attack was made on the house, the duty of the inmates was to have thrown themselves upon the protection of Providence without yielding an iota to the demands of the remorseless ruffians without. If they could not have withstood their violence, but must have been overpowered by superior numbers, they had better have died calling upon God for mercy than to have basely jeoparded the lives of feeble women to appease a ferocious rabble. *That* would have been the pious chivalry of true Israelites. The probability we think is, that Omnipotence would in some way have interposed for their rescue.

27. *Was fallen down at the door of the house.* While we cannot but be moved with deep compassion in view of the hard lot and the miserable end of this unhappy woman, yet the righteous judgment of God is not to be overlooked in this her closing scene. She had sinned, and she now suffers. Though her father and her husband had both forgiven her, yet God remembered against her her fault when she was consigned to the

28 And he said unto her, Up, and let us be going. But [z]none answered. Then the man took her *up* upon an ass, and the man rose up, and gat him unto his place.

29 ¶ And when he was come into his house, he took a knife, and laid hold on his concubine, and [a]divided her, *together* with her bones, into twelve pieces, and sent her into all the coasts of Israel.

30 And it was so, that all that saw it, said, There was no such deed done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt unto this day: consider of it, [b]take advice, and speak *your minds*.

hands of these ruthless monsters. We may hope, however, though it be almost hoping against hope, that her soul was touched with penitence at the eleventh hour, and that when she fell with outstretched arms upon the threshold, it was with a fervent supplication for the divine forgiveness. But the justice of God in this melancholy event does by no means extenuate the enormous wickedness of the men of Gibeah in executing it, than which nothing could be more barbarous and inhuman.

29. *Divided her—into twelve pieces, and sent her*, &c. It is to be presumed that with the pieces he sent to each tribe a circumstantial account of the barbarity of the men of Gibeah, which had deprived him of his wife. To our ideas there is something peculiarly shocking in the procedure, but it was doubtless in accordance with the notions of the times, and as there was no supreme magistrate to whom to appeal for redress, it was probably the most effectual method of rousing the nation to take up the Levite's cause as one that concerned them all. It was a measure, in fact, that seems to have been considered as putting the twelve tribes under an anathema, and solemnly binding them, on pain of being themselves dealt with in the same manner, to avenge the horrible outrage. The whole nation accordingly instantly understood it as a universal anathema, and entered into an indissoluble covenant, to see justice done to the injured Levite. This appears from the fact of the tribes actually taking up arms, as they did—from their swearing before the ark not to return to their tents or into their houses, till they had punished the offenders, ch. 20. 8, 9—from their putting to the sword all that remained in Gibeah, both man and beast, and burning all the cities and towns of Benjamin, ch. 20. 48—from their swearing with an imprecation not to give their daughters in marriage to the sons of Benjamin, and cursing him who should do so, ch. 21. 1-18—and finally, from their engaging themselves by a terrible oath to kill every Israelite who should not take arms against the Benjamites, ch. 21. 5. These are all marks of a solemn act of anathema, and in no other light can the transaction be rightly viewed. See 'Scripture Illustrations,' p. 146.

30. *There was no such deed done nor seen*, &c. Its enormity was unparalleled, and they were struck dumb and confounded, as it were, at the bare mention of it. It seems accord-

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[z] ch. 20. 5. [a] ch. 20. 6. See 1 Sam. 11. 7.

[b] ch. 20. 7. Prov. 13. 10.

## CHAPTER XX.

THEN [a] all the children of Israel went out, and the congregation was gathered together as one man, from [b] Dan even to Beer-sheba, with the land of Gilead, unto the LORD [c] in Mizpeh.

2 And the chief of all the people, *even* of all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of

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[a] Deut, 13. 12. Josh. 22. 12. ch. 21. 5. 1 Sam. 11. 7. [b] ch. 18. 29. 1 Sam. 3. 20. 2 Sam. 3. 10, and 24. 2.

[c] Judg. 10. 17, and 11. 11. 1 Sam. 7. 5, and 10. 17.

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ingly to have passed into a proverb, 'They have deeply corrupted themselves as *in the days of Gibeah*,' Hos. 9. 9.——¶ *Consider of it, take advice and speak* your minds. Heb. 'put it to yourselves, take counsel upon it, and speak.' This was the prelude to the council held and the measures adopted, which are recited in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER XX.

1. *From Dan even to Beersheba, with the land of Gilead.* From the utmost borders of the land in every direction. By the land of Gilead is meant the trans-Jordanic region, where were planted the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh. The convention seems not to have been summoned together by any superintending head, but by the consent and agreement, as it were, of one common heart, prompted by a holy zeal for the Lord of hosts and the honor of Israel.——¶ *Unto the Lord in Mizpeh.* The usual import of the phrase אל יהוה *el Yehovah, to the Lord*, is the same with לפני יהוה *liphnë Yehovah, before the Lord*, i. e. before the tabernacle, or in the presence of the ark of the covenant, where God was wont to be inquired of by his people. But as the ark was now at Shiloh and not at Mizpeh, it has been supposed by many commentators that the phrase 'unto or before the Lord,' may signify simply meeting *in the name of the Lord*, to consult him and offer up prayers and supplications. But although it is true that God is wherever his people are piously assembled in his name, yet so uniform throughout the Scriptures is the sense of the phrase given above, that we are averse to departing from it in this instance. By comparing v. 18, it would appear that they did not *immediately* resort to the tabernacle, but assembled first at Mizpeh, and thence went up to the house of the Lord either at Shiloh or Bethel. The expression, however, 'were gathered unto the Lord,' is warranted by the fact that it *formed a part of their plan* to consult the oracle in reference to their present expedition. The Mizpeh here mentioned was a place in the borders of Judah and Benjamin, and therefore sometimes spoken of as belonging to the one and sometimes to the other, Josh. 15. 38 and 18. 26. It was but a short distance from Shiloh.

2. *The chief of all the people, even of all the tribes of Israel.* The original exhibits a very remarkable phraseology;—'The corners (פנות *pinnoth*) of the people, all the tribes of Israel,' where the 'corners' or chiefs of the people are *identified* with the tribes themselves, instead of being distinguished from them, as is erroneously done in our translation by

God, four hundred thousand footmen [d] that drew sword.

3 (Now the children of Benjamin heard that the children of Israel were gone up to Mizpeh). Then said the children of Israel, Tell *us*, how was this wickedness?

4 And the Levite, the husband of the woman that was slain, answered and said, [e] I came into Gibeah that *belongeth* to Benjamin, I and my concubine, to lodge.

5 [f] And the men of Gibeah rose against me, and beset the house round about upon me by night, *and* thought to have slain

[d] ch. 8. 10.

[e] ch. 19. 15. [f] ch. 19. 22.

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the gratuitous insertion of the word 'of' before 'all the tribes.' This is evident from its being immediately said that they were assembled to the number of four hundred thousand, which certainly cannot be meant of the chiefs alone. See on ch. 10. 18. The leaders of a community, as the Scriptures represent government, are merely the *executive organs* of the mass of the people, having no interest or will separate from theirs. The term 'corner' here employed is a metaphor taken from the *corner-stones* of a building, which are its main support. What these corner-stones are to a material fabric, the chiefs of the tribes were to the tribes themselves. Comp. 1 Sam. 14. 38; Is. 19. 13.——¶ *In the assembly of the people of God.* Heb. קהל *ka'hal*, Gr. εκκλησια, the usual word for *church*, as if from the object of their meeting they had convened *ecclesiastically*, or as *a religious assembly*. This is confirmed by the qualifying adjunct, 'people of God.' Though the occasion was a very exciting one, and they were in danger of giving way to unhallowed passion, yet they did not forget that they came together as 'the people of God,' and were bound to demean themselves accordingly. Christians sometimes lose sight of this in their public assemblies, and consequently *act very much out of character.*

3. *The children of Benjamin heard*, &c. But they paid little or no attention to it. Though they had probably received a formal summons like the rest of their brethren, yet they heeded it not; they took no steps towards healing the breach that had occurred, and preventing the consequences that ensued; on the contrary, they were rather hardened and exasperated than otherwise by the proceedings of the other tribes.——¶ *Then said the children of Israel, Tell us*, &c. Heb. דברו *dabberu*, *tell ye us*, pl., a general challenge to any one, or to all who were acquainted with the facts, to come forward and testify to them.

4. *And the Levite.* Heb. האיש הלוי *hâish hallēvi*, *and the man, the Levite.* He and his servant, and the old man his host, were undoubtedly all present, prepared to unite in the same statement. The Levite's narration of facts, made 'without preface or passion,' is remarkable for its brevity and directness. He speaks like a man who felt that he had no need to employ oratorical arts to work upon the feelings of his hearers and excite their just indignation. The bare recital of the facts themselves would be sufficient.

5. *Thought to have slain me.* In

me: [g]and my concubine have they forced, that she is dead.

6 And [h]I took my concubine, and cut her in pieces, and sent her throughout all the country of the inheritance of Israel: for they [i]have committed lewdness and folly in Israel.

7 Behold, ye *are* all children of Israel; [k]give here your advice and counsel.

8 ¶ And all the people arose as one man, saying, We will not any *of us* go to his tent, neither will we any *of us* turn into his house:

9 But now this *shall be* the thing which we will do to Gibeah: *we will go up* by lot against it;

10 And we will take ten men of an hundred throughout all the tribes of Israel, and a hundred of a thousand, and a thousand out of ten thousand, to fetch victual for the people, that they may do, when they come to Gibeah of Benjamin, according to all the folly that they have wrought in Israel.

11 So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, knit together as one man.

12 ¶ [l]And the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, What wickedness *is* this that is done among you?

13 Now therefore deliver *us* the men, [m]the children of Belial, which *are* in Gibeah, that we may put them to death, and

[g] ch. 19. 25, 26. [h] ch. 19. 29. [i] Josh. 7. 15. [k] ch. 19. 30.

[l] Deut. 13. 14. Josh. 22. 13, 16. [m] Deut. 13. 13. ch. 19. 22.

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case I should refuse to accede to their vile wishes.——¶*Forced.* Heb. ענו *innu, humbled.*

8. *We will not any* of us *go to his tent.* We will have satisfaction for this wickedness before we return home.

10. *To fetch victual for the people.* A tenth part of them were selected to provide food and forage for the army, which might thus be wholly occupied in punishing the inhabitants of Gibeah.

13. *The children of Benjamin would not hearken.* Thus in effect bringing the whole tribe to be partakers of the guilt of the men of Gibeah. By thus refusing to comply with the just and reasonable requisition of their brethren they virtually said; 'We will stand by them in what they have done; nay, we would ourselves have acted the same part had we been present.' It is difficult to conceive a case of more hardened and aggravated depravity than this. 'Who would not have looked that the hands of Benjamin should have been first on Gibeah; and that they should have readily sent the heads of the offenders for a second service after the fragments of the concubine? But now instead of punishing the sin, they patronise the actors, and will rather die in resisting justice, than live and prosper in furthering it! The abetting of evil is worse than the commission; this may be on infirmity, but that must be on resolution. Easy punishment is too much favor to sin; connivance is much worse; but the defence of it, and that unto blood, is intolerable.' *Bp. Hall.*

[n]put away evil from Israel. But the children of Benjamin would not hearken to the voice of their brethren the children of Israel:

14 But the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together out of the cities unto Gibeah, to go out to battle against the children of Israel.

15 And the children of Benjamin were numbered at that time out of the cities twenty and six thousand men that drew sword, beside the inhabitants of Gibeah, which were numbered seven hundred chosen men.

16 Among all this people *there were* seven hundred chosen men [o]left-handed; every one could sling stones at an hair-*breadth*, and not miss.

17 And the men of Israel, besides Benjamin, were numbered four hundred thousand men that drew sword: all these *were* men of war.

18 ¶ And the children of Israel arose, and [p]went up to the house of God, and [q]asked counsel of God, and said, Which of us shall go up first to the battle against the children of Benjamin? And the LORD said, Judah *shall go up* first.

[n] Deut. 17. 12.

[o] ch. 3. 15. 1 Chron. 12. 2. [p] ver. 23, 26. [q] Num. 27. 21. ch. 1. 1.

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16. *Left handed.* Heb. 'shut or obstructed of the right hand.' See Note on ch. 3. 15. It is somewhat of a curious circumstance, that *Benjamin*, which signifies *the son of the right hand*, should have had so much of a left handed posterity.——¶ *And not miss.* Heb. ולא יחטא *velo ya'hati.* Gr. και ουκ εξαμαρτανοντες, *and not sin:* thus affording a clue to the true import of the word *sin*, viz. missing the mark, erring from one's scope. This is well expressed in the New Testament by αμαρτανω, from α negative, and μαρπτω, *to hit the mark.* To love, serve, and enjoy God is 'our being's end and *aim*,' which the sinner in his course of transgression, *misses*, and too often, alas! to his final undoing.

18. *The children of Israel arose, and went up to the house of God.* Heb. ביתאל *beth-el*, which some expositors take to be the place so denominated, supposing that the ark had been removed thither on this occasion from Shiloh. And it must be admitted that there is some force in the remark of Rosenmüller, that the habitation of the ark is elsewhere uniformly called בית האלהים *bëth hâelohim*, and in no other instance, בית אל *bëth-ël*, as here. Still, as we can see no sufficient reason for such a transfer of the tabernacle at this time, we abide by the sense given in our translation, and suppose that the 'house of God' at Shiloh is intended. This place was very near to Mizpeh, where they were now assembled, and the enterprise in which they were now engaged was altogether too important to allow them to think of entering upon it without previously taking counsel of God. But the defective manner in which this was done will appear very strikingly in the sequel.——¶ *Which of us shall go up first*, &c. It will be observed that they do not ask whether they shall *go up at all*, which undoubtedly ought to have been their

19 And the children of Israel rose up in the morning, and encamped against Gibeah.

20 And the men of Israel went out to battle against Benjamin; and the men of Israel put themselves in array to fight against them at Gibeah.

21 And [r] the children of Benjamin came forth out of Gibeah, and destroyed down to the ground of the Israelites that day twenty and two thousand men.

22 And the people, the men of Israel, encouraged themselves, and set their battle again in array in the place where they put themselves in array the first day.

23 ([s] And the children of Israel went up and wept before the

[r] Gen. 49. 27.

[s] ver. 26, 27.

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first inquiry on an occasion of so much importance. But confiding in the justness of their cause, they take it for granted that all is right in resorting to arms against their brethren, and merely inquire who should take the lead in the expedition, about which it is not unlikely there had been some contention in the assembly. For wise reasons the Most High was pleased to leave them to learn their error, or at least their precipitance in this respect, by the event. He says, in reply, not as our translation has it, 'Judah (shall go up) first,' but simply יהודה בתחלה *Yehudâh batte'hillâh*, *Judah* (is) *in the precedency*, q. d. 'Judah has already, ch. 1. 2, been constituted leader of the tribes, the pre-eminence in every important point has been before assigned to that tribe; of what use then is inquiry on that head now?' This answer, instead of being rightly construed as implying the divine approbation of their proceedings, is rather to be regarded as a *sovereign connivance* in their rashness. Designing undoubtedly to bring about the punishment of the mass of the people for their guilty toleration of the idolatry established in Dan, he is pleased for the present to 'choose their delusions.' It may be admitted that apart from their delinquency in sparing the Danites, they had justly incurred defeat by their precipitate entrance upon the war, but God in his righteous providence often makes a lesser sin the occasion of punishing a greater, and yet no iniquity can be laid to his charge. A decaying tree, which has withstood the violence of many a tempest, may at last be blown down by the merest breath of wind. Let no sinner from long forbearance promise himself final impunity. 'Man knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.'

22. *The men of Israel encouraged themselves.* Heb. יתחזק *yith'hazzēk*, *strengthened themselves;* i. e. assumed fresh courage. Attributing the recent defeat to some misconduct which they conceive themselves able to remedy, they are altogether sanguine in view of the result of another engagement.——¶ *In the place where they put themselves in array the first day.* Determined, it would seem, to retrieve the disgrace of their failure on the very spot where it had been incurred. Should they succeed in a second conflict *under the same circum-*

LORD until even, and asked counsel of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up again to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother? And the LORD said, Go up against him.)

24 And the children of Israel came near against the children of Benjamin the second day.

25 And [t]Benjamin went forth against them out of Gibeah the second day, and destroyed down to the ground of the children of Israel again eighteen thousand men; all these drew the sword.

[t] ver. 21.

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*stances*, it would effectually wipe away the ignominy contracted by the issue of the first.

23. *Went up and wept before the Lord.* Yet all their arrangements for battle had been previously made, and they seem now to have consulted God, as some men consult the Scriptures, *to establish a previously formed opinion.* It was not to learn their duty in the first instance, but to obtain sanction for a measure upon which they had *already* resolved. They should have deferred making their preparations till after they had made their confession and taken counsel. Their tears and lamentations under these circumstances availed them nothing; at least, did not secure them from defeat; and as in their self-confidence, they made no inquiry as to success, nor invoked assistance, God gave them no promise on that score.——¶*And the Lord said, Go up against him.* As if he had said, 'You have good cause for going up against them, they have justly rendered themselves liable to punishment;' and yet the result plainly proves, that he did not design hereby to convey to them any intimation that his blessing or protection would accompany them, so long as they were not duly humbled and penitent for their sins, and thus *prepared* for success. The permission, therefore, to go up was similar to that given to Balaam to go with the elders of Moab—a mere tolerance, not an approbation, of the step, *as viewed in connexion with the motives by which it was prompted.* Seeing them resolved to go forward at all events, he was pleased to exercise his prerogative and return to them an answer *apparently coinciding* with their wishes, and capable of being so understood, as to mislead them, in case the perverseness of their hearts should put such a construction upon it. But there was no *necessity* for their misinterpreting the oracle, and God is still to be accounted righteous, though his words or his ways may prove an *occasion* of stumbling to those whose hearts are already predisposed to it. He is under no obligation to correct the erroneous impressions of those who 'draw near to him with their lips while their hearts are far from him.'

25. *Destroyed—again eighteen thousand men.* The remarks already made above will serve to throw light upon the reasons of this disastrous issue of a cause in itself good. God had ulterior designs to effect beyond the merited punishment of the Benjamites. He had great moral lessons to teach, not to the men of that age only, but to the most distant generations. Especially may we suppose that he proposed by such a result to impress upon our minds the

26 ¶ Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, [u] went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the LORD, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings before the LORD.

27 And the children of Israel

[u] ver. 18.

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conviction, that the success of any cause depends not solely upon its intrinsic goodness, but also upon its being conducted with a right spirit and by proper means. Israel had ample grounds for proceeding to extremities against their offending brethren, and yet from not going forward in an acceptable manner they met with a terrible rebuke when they least expected it; and not only so, for a time the cause of the wicked seemed to triumph. The Prophet Hosea, ch. 10, 9, in allusion to this event says, 'The battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them,' i. e. did not *at first* overtake them, and any one who should have witnessed the two defeats of Israel would have been ready to conclude that the cause for which victory was decided was right. But we are not to judge from events. Righteousness is not always triumphant in this world. It may be oppressed, and the supporters of it for a long time foiled in their labors and apparently trodden under foot; but though cast down, they shall not be destroyed: a day is at hand when God will vindicate his own cause, and evince the equity of all his dispensations. In the mean time, let us make the unalterable word of God the rule of our judgment as well as of our actions, and we can never go far amiss.

26. *Went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept*, &c. Confounded by these repeated strokes of adverse providence, they are led at length to 'accomplish a more diligent search' into the true causes of the sad disaster which had befallen them. They see now that they had trusted too much to the goodness of their cause and the superiority of their numbers. They are now convinced that they ought to have begun at the outset with repentance and reformation, with solemn sacrifices and earnest supplications, instead of rushing forward with unhumbled hearts, reckless of their own apostasies, and prompted by a zeal for God in which was largely mingled the 'strange fire' of human resentment. The consequence is, that in deep affliction they now compass God's altar, abasing their souls under the sense of conscious guilt, rejecting every vain confidence, bewailing not so much their losses as the unworthiness which had caused them, and devoutly imploring that aid which they had before so rashly taken for granted. This was the right method of procedure, and the happy fruits of their weeping and fasting begin at once to appear. Being brought to a proper frame of spirit they are prepared to receive the blessing, and the Most High accordingly gives them positive assurance of success; 'Go up, for to-morrow I will deliver them into thine hand.' Whenever a soul, in true humiliation, is brought low before God, the end of its calamities is at hand; the day of deliverance has

inquired of the LORD, (for [x] the ark of the covenant of God *was* there in those days,

28 [y] And Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, [z] stood before it in those days,) saying, Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother, or shall I cease? And the LORD said, Go up; for to-morrow I will deliver them into thy hand.

29 And Israel [a] set liers in wait round about Gibeah.

30 And the children of Israel went up against the children of Benjamin on the third day, and put themselves in array against Gibeah, as at other times.

31 And the children of Benjamin went out against the people-

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[x] Josh. 18. 1. 1 Sam. 4. 3, 4. [y] Josh. 24. 33. [z] Deut. 10. 8, and 18. 5.

[a] So Josh. 8. 4.

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already dawned.——¶ *Sat there before the Lord.* Implying either that they assumed the usual posture of mourners, Lam. 1. 1; Ps. 137. 1, or that they *abode* there, as the same phrase is rendered ch. 21. 12, during the whole day, in the exercise of unfeigned contrition of spirit, or perhaps more properly both. Every thing in the phraseology conveys the idea that their repentance was deep, thorough and sincere. Extraordinary cases require extraordinary acts of self-abasement, and godly sorrow. Men are often but little aware how deep their spiritual wounds need to be probed in order to effect a perfect cure. We are apt to heal the hurts of our souls too slightly. Probably one great design of this narrative was to teach us that God often sees beneath a fair exterior an amount of corruption, which an ordinary or superficial repentance will not avail to remove.

28. *Phinehas—stood before it in those days.* Or, Heb. עמד לפניו *omëd lepanauv, before him,* i. e. God. 'Standing,' or 'standing before' any one, is a Scriptural term for *ministering*, as appears from Deut. 10. 8; 18. 7; Prov. 22. 29; Jer. 52. 12, compared with 2 Kings 25. 8, in the former of which the original for 'served' is 'stood before.' This was the same Phinehas who so remarkably signalized his zeal for the glory of God on a former occasion, Num. 25. Had this war occurred after the death of Samson, Phinehas must now have been upwards of 300 years old; but it fell out between the death of Joshua and the first judge.

29. *Israel set liers in wait.* Notwithstanding the express promise which had been given them of success, yet they expected it not without the use of the proper means. Divine assurances rightly received, instead of leading to remissness and presumption, will never fail to inspire every prudent precaution. The management of the stratagem here employed is very largely described in the ensuing verses, but it is sufficient to say that in its general feature it was very similar to that employed with so much success by Joshua in the taking of Ai, Josh. 8. 1–29. 'When God hath used Benjamin to execute his justice against Israel for not punishing idolatry; he then useth Israel to punish Benjamin for not delivering Gibeah up to justice.' *Lightfoot.*

31. *Were drawn away from the city.*

ple, *and* were drawn away from the city; and they began to smite of the people, *and* kill, as at other times, in the highways, of which one goeth up to the house of God, and the other to Gibeah in the field, about thirty men of Israel.

32 And the children of Benjamin said, They *are* smitten down before us, as at the first. But the children of Israel said, Let us flee, and draw them from the city unto the highways.

33 And all the men of Israel rose up out of their place, and put themselves in array at Baal-tamar: and the liers in wait of Israel came forth out of their places, *even* out of the meadows of Gibeah.

34 And there came against Gibeah ten thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and the battle was sore: [b]but they knew not that evil *was* near them.

35 And the Lord smote Benjamin before Israel: and the children of Israel destroyed of the Benjamites that day twenty and five thousand and an hundred men: all these drew the sword.

36 So the children of Benjamin saw that they were smitten: [c] for the men of Israel gave place to the Benjamites, because they trusted unto the liers in wait which they had set beside Gibeah.

37 [d] And the liers in wait hasted, and rushed upon Gibeah; and the liers in wait drew *themselves* along, and smote all the city with the edge of the sword.

b Josh. 8. 14. Isai. 47. 11. c Josh. 8. 15.
d Josh. 8. 19.

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By the feigned flight of a portion of the invaders.——¶ *Began to smite of the people*, and *kill, as at other times.* Heb. 'began to smite of the people wounded, as at other times;' i. e. to smite so as mortally to wound them; a Hebraic idiom of not uncommon occurrence. See on ch. 15. 19.——¶ *In the highways.* That is, perhaps, 'in the meeting of the ways.' The subsequent phrase, 'in the field,' instead of being connected with Gibeah, ought, we imagine, to be connected with 'highways,' implying that this junction of ways or roads was at *considerable distance* from the city of Gibeah. It is difficult to conceive what is meant by 'Gibeah in the field,' as the city so called was undoubtedly situated on a hill, and we have no intimation of any other place of the same name situated 'in the field.'

33. *Out of the meadows of Gibeah.* Heb. ממערה גבע *mimmaarĕh gâba*, more properly rendered '*caves of Gibeah*,' for how could an ambuscade be placed in meadows? The details of the narrative, included v. 31–43, are extremely perplexed, and we despair of being able, by any explanation, to simplify them. The general drift of the writer, however, is evident, and to understand that is perhaps sufficient.

35. *The Lord smote*, &c. In this verse the sacred writer relates the event of the battle in general terms. In the sequel he resumes the story, giving the particulars of the battle, and the consequences of the victory more in detail.

38 Now there was an appointed sign between the men of Israel and the liers in wait, that they should make a great flame with smoke rise up out of the city.

39 And when the men of Israel retired in the battle, Benjamin began to smite *and* kill of the men of Israel about thirty persons: for they said, Surely they are smitten down before us, as *in* the first battle.

40 But when the flame began to arise up out of the city with a pillar of smoke, the Benjamites [e] looked behind them, and behold, the flame of the city ascended up to heaven.

41 And when the men of Israel turned again, the men of Benjamin were amazed: for they saw that evil was come upon them.

42 Therefore they turned *their backs* before the men of Israel unto the way of the wilderness; but the battle overtook them; and them which *came* out of the cities they destroyed in the midst of them.

43 *Thus* they enclosed the Benjamites round about, *and* chased them, *and* trode them down with ease over against Gibeah toward the sun-rising.

44 And there fell of Benjamin eighteen thousand men; all these *were* men of valor.

45 And they turned and fled toward the wilderness unto the rock of [f] Rimmon . and they gleaned of them in the highways five thousand men; and pursued

[e] Josh. 8. 20.

[f] Josh. 15. 32.

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37. *Drew themselves along.* Extended themselves. We have only to conceive of a dense mass of men hitherto confined to a narrow compass suddenly stretching themselves out in a long train, and rapidly urging their way to the city.

38. *A great flame with smoke.* Heb. משאת העשן *masath heâshân, a great elevation of smoke.* So also v. 40.

40. *The flame of the city ascended up.* Heb. 'the whole, the entireness of the city ascended.' The general sense, but not the exact meaning of the Hebrew, is preserved in our translation.

42. *Turned* their backs *before the men of Israel*, &c. Undoubtedly an erroneous rendering. As we read the original, instead of turning their backs they turned their faces towards the enemy. Seeing their city on fire and all hope cut off in that quarter, they again face the enemy with a determination, if possible, to cut a passage through them, and escape to the wilderness. But while attempting this, the ambush from the city (here according to a Hebrew idiom, ch. 12. 7, called 'cities') fell upon them in the rear; so that they were properly said to be 'destroyed in the midst of them,' i. e. between the two divisions.

45. *They turned and fled toward the wilderness unto the rock of Rimmon.* A small remnant escaped, notwithstanding every effort to prevent it, and fled to the rock of Rimmon, supposed to lie in the wilderness of Judah, about twenty-six miles south-west of Jerusalem.——¶ *Gleaned of them in the highways.* Cut off all the stragglers that they found

hard after them unto Gidom, and slew two thousand men of them.

46 So that all which fell that day of Benjamin were twenty and five thousand men that drew the sword; all these *were* men of valor.

47 [g]But six hundred men turned and fled to the wilderness unto the rock Rimmon, and abode in the rock Rimmon four months.

48 And the men of Israel turned again upon the children of Benjamin, and smote them with the edge of the sword, as well the men of *every* city, as the beast, and all that came to hand: also they set on fire all the cities that they came to.

[g] ch. 21. 13.

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scattered here and there over the country. The metaphor is highly expressive, implying that they were cut off as clean as a field or a vineyard that has been gleaned after the harvest or the vintage has been gathered in.

46. *Twenty and five thousand.* The additional hundred mentioned v. 35 is here omitted, and merely the round number retained. There lacks also another thousand to make out the whole force of the Benjamites as given v. 15, but these are supposed to have fallen in the two former battles, and so are omitted here, where he speaks only of those slain in the third day.

47. *The rock of Rimmon.* This was doubtless some strong rocky hold or fastness, that took its name from the village of *Rimmon*, mentioned by Eusebius, fifteen miles north from Jerusalem. It appears that rocks are still resorted to in the East as places of security, and some of them are even capable of sustaining a siege. De la Roque says, that the Grand Seignior, wishing to seize the person of the Emir (Fakaddin, prince of the Druzes) gave orders to the pacha to take him prisoner; he accordingly came in search of him with a new army, in the district of Cheuf, which is part of mount Lebanon, wherein is the village of Gesin, and close to it the rock which served for a retreat to the emir. The pacha pressed the emir so closely, that this unfortunate prince was obliged to shut himself up in a cleft of a great rock with a small number of his officers. The pacha besieged them for several months; and was gowing to blow up the rock with a mine, when the emir capitulated. (*Bagster.*)

48. *Smote them with the edge of the sword*, &c. Probably the excessive severity of the slaughter on this occasion, considered as the act of Israel, cannot be justified; and so they themselves seem to have viewed it after their passions had had time to cool. ch. 21. 3. The crime of the men of Gibeah was indeed great, but it does not appear to have been sufficient to warrant the extirpation of a whole tribe. Considered, however, as the sovereign allotment of Jehovah we must acquiesce in it as a dispensation, to the justice of which we can make no reply.

## CHAPTER XXI.

1. *The men of Israel had sworn*, &c. At the commencement of the war, when assembled at Mizpeh. We have no previous account of this

## CHAPTER XXI.

NOW [a] the men of Israel had sworn in Mizpeh, saying, There shall not any of us give his daughter unto Benjamin to wife.

2 And the people came [b] to the house of God, and abode there till even before God, and lifted up their voices, and wept sore;

3 And said, O LORD God of Israel, why is this come to pass in Israel, that there should be to-day one tribe lacking in Israel?

[a] ch. 20. 1. [b] ch. 20. 18, 26.

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oath, but it is plainly of a piece with the general precipitancy and rashness which characterized their conduct on this occasion, and serves still farther to account for the sad discomfiture which marked the outset of their enterprise. The oath, which, as appears from v. 18, was attended with an *execration*, was not probably made with the design of extirpating the tribe, for it supposes that some of the Benjamites might survive, and if so, they might marry the surviving women of their own tribe; but it merely expresses a general determination to treat the actors and abettors of the horrid deed perpetrated at Gibeah, as they would treat the worst of the devoted Canaanites, with whom they were utterly forbidden to intermarry. Their own subsequent conduct, however, as related in the present chapter, proves that they were sensible of having gone too far, and reminds us of the fact, that when our spirits are exasperated we too often say and do that which in our calmer moments we wish unsaid and undone. Nothing more requires the controlling influence of the wisdom which is from above, than the impulses of an ardent zeal. 'There may be over-doing in well-doing. That is no good divinity which swallows up humanity.' *Henry.*

2. *Lifted up their voices, and wept sore.* They found but melancholy matter for triumph in their recent victory. It was an event not to be celebrated by the voice of joy and praise, but by that of lamentation and mourning and wo. Having satisfied their revenge, they now experience the truth of the remark, that 'strong passions make work for repentance.' Still they did well in appealing to God in their extremity. His infinite compassion allows us to have recourse to him to repair the breaches which our own folly and infatuation have made. Provided we are truly penitent in view of the past, we may say to him of the desolations we have wrought, 'This ruin be under thy hand,' i. e. under thy remedial, thy restoring hand.

3. *Why is this come to pass in Israel?* &c. This, if we regard the mere letter, has somewhat the air of irreverent remonstrance or expostulation with God, for suffering such a calamity to befall his people; but considering the penitent frame of mind in which they were now assembled, we know not how to attribute to them so gross an impiety as this interpretation would suppose. We take it rather as an expression of mingled self-reproach and supplication, equivalent to saying, 'Alas! how is it possible that we could have been guilty of such an outrage! that we should have uttered a vow in-

4 And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people rose early, and [c]built there an altar, and offered burnt-offerings, and peace-offerings.

5 And the children of Israel said, Who *is there* among all the tribes of Israel that came not up with the congregation unto the Lord? [d]For they had made a great oath concerning him that came not up to the LORD to Mizpeh, saying, He shall surely be put to death.

6 And the children of Israel repented them for Benjamin

[c] 2 Sam. 24. 25.

[d] ch. 5. 23.

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volving such a necessity as the virtual extinction of a tribe! O Lord God, is there no way of extrication from the dilemma in which we have so thoughtlessly ensnared ourselves?' The prayer evidently implies the belief on their part, that it would be more offensive in the eyes of heaven if they should persist in adhering to their rash purpose, than if they should renounce it, and yet the burden of a solemn obligation rests upon their consciences, from which they dare not deem themselves released except by a divine dispensation. See Note on Josh. 9. 15.

4. *Built there an altar.* There was, undoubtedly, an altar already established at Shiloh for the ordinary round of services, but the probability is, that they now built one of larger dimensions than the other, in order to accommodate the greater multitude of sacrifices which they proposed to offer on this occasion. A similar measure, we learn 1 Kings, 8. 64, was adopted by Solomon for a similar reason. The motives by which they were governed made the step lawful. The altar was erected, not in competition, but in communion, with that already established at the door of the tabernacle.

5. *Had made a great oath*, &c. That is, an oath attended with a fearful execration, an anathema, against him who should fall under its effects. They now begin to perceive a clue to guide them out of the labyrinth of perplexity in which they were previously involved. Whether this expedient was divinely suggested, we are not informed.——¶*He shall surely be put to death.* A severe sentence, but perhaps just under the circumstances. Indifference to so aggravated a crime as that of the men of Gibeah showed an extremely depraved state of moral feeling, and their brethren could not but look upon their refusal to aid in bringing the offenders to condign punishment as a virtual sanction of the deed. They felt bound, therefore, to proceed against them just as if they had personally shared in the guilt of the heinous transaction. Yet we know not that the actual execution of their oath in the indiscriminate slaughter of men, married women, and children, is to be any more excused than the previous unsparing destruction of the Benjamites. Without presuming to denominate the passions by which they were prompted 'cursed,' as did Jacob the spirit of Simeon and Levi in their conduct towards the Shechemites, we may still say in the patriarch's language of 'their anger, it was fierce, and their wrath it was cruel.'

their brother, and said, There is one tribe cut off from Israel this day.

7 How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing we have sworn by the LORD, that we will not give them of our daughters to wives?

8 ¶ And they said, What one *is there* of the tribes of Israel that came not up to Mizpeh to the LORD? And behold, there came none to the camp from [e] Jabesh-gilead to the assembly.

9 For the people were numbered, and behold *there were* none of the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead there.

10 And the congregation sent thither twelve thousand men of the valiantest, and commanded

6. *There is one tribe cut off from Israel this day.* Likely to be cut off; that will be cut off, unless some measures are taken to prevent it. For it appears from the next verse, though no where expressly asserted, that they had destroyed all the women of Benjamin, and as only the small remnant of six hundred men remained, who had fled to the rock of Rimmon, there was evident danger of the extinction of the whole tribe. But this was an event not to be thought of, if it were possible to prevent it. 'God had taken care of every tribe; their number twelve was that which they were known by; every tribe had its station appointed in the camp, and his stone in the high priest's breastplate; every tribe had his blessing both from Jacob and Moses, and it would be an intolerable reproach to them, if they should drop any out of this illustrious jury, and lose one out of twelve; especially Benjamin, the youngest, who was especially dear to Jacob, their common ancestor, and whom all the rest ought to have been in a particular manner tender of. Benjamin is not; what then will become of Jacob? Benjamin becomes a Benoni; the son of the right hand, a son of sorrow!' *Henry.*

8. *There came none to the camp from Jabesh-gilead.* This was a city of the half-tribe of Manasseh, east of Jordan, situated on a hill near Mount Gilead, about fifteen miles east of Jordan, and about an equal distance south of Gadara. It was not far from the lake of Genesaret. Eusebius and Jerome say that it was a large town in their time, standing upon a hill six miles south of Pella, in the way to Gerasa, now Djerash. The Wadi Yabes, mentioned by Burckhardt, which empties itself into the Jordan, in the neighborhood of Bisan or Bethshan, and upon which Pella was situated, seems to have taken its name from Jabesh. Near this spot, therefore, we must look for its site; and the place called *Kalaut Rabbad* seems to correspond very nearly to the spot; though it probably still retains, among the Arabs, its ancient name. (*Bagster.*)

10. *Sent thither twelve thousand men of the valiantest.* Heb. מבני החיל *mibbenë he'hâyil, of the sons of might, or prowess.* It is seriously to be questioned whether they were justifiable in resolving upon such a summary mode of vengeance, without any previous inquiry, or giving them any opportunity of defence. The presumption, it is true, was decidedly

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[e] 1 Sam. 11. 1, and 31. 11.

them, saying, [f]Go and smite the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead with the edge of the sword, with the women and the children.

11 And this *is* the thing that ye shall do, [g]Ye shall utterly destroy every male, and every woman that hath lain by man.

12 And they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead four hundred young virgins that had known no man by lying with any male: and they brought them unto the camp to [h]Shiloh, which *is* in the land of Canaan.

13 And the whole congregation sent *some* to speak to the children of Benjamin [i]that *were* in the rock Rimmon, and to call peaceably unto them.

14 And Benjamin came again at that time; and they gave them wives which they had

f ver. 5, and ch. 5. 23. 1 Sam. 11. 7. g Num. 31. 17.

h Josh. 18. 1. i ch. 20. 47. Deut. 20. 10.

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*against* the men of Jabesh-gilead, yet it is still possible that they might have been able to plead some extenuating circumstances in their behalf, and if so, they certainly should have had an opportunity afforded them. But when the passions are vehemently excited, men are prone to be carried beyond all bounds of equity or decorum, and the Israelites in this instance appear to have committed a second crime to repair the consequences of a first.

11. *That hath lain by man.* Heb. ידעת משכב זכר *yodeath mishkab zâkâr, knowing, or having experience, of the lying by man.* This order excepted of course the virgins from its effects. They were perhaps influenced in this by the precedent recorded Num. 31. 17, 18, where Moses, when he sent the same number of men to avenge the Lord upon Midian, gave it in charge, as here, that all the married women be slain with their husbands, but that the virgins should be preserved alive. We may suppose the unmarried maidens to have been easily distinguishable by their mode of dress from the married women.

12. *Four hundred young virgins.* Heb. ארבע מאות נערה בתולה *arba mëoth naharâh bethulâh, four hundred young women, virgins.* Unmarried, but marriageable. It is to be presumed that all other young females were also spared.——¶ *Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan.* Thus particularly designated, because Jabesh-gilead was not situated in Canaan proper, but in the land of Gilead east of the Jordan.

13. *In the rock Rimmon.* That is, in a cave in the rock of which they made a fastness, and there vigorously maintained their position.——¶ *To call peaceably unto them.* Heb. ויקראו להם שלום *vayikreu lâhem shâlōm, to proclaim peace unto them.* Arab. 'saluting them and giving them a pledge.' To assure them that their former enmity was now extinguished, and that they might now with safety leave their stronghold. They had escaped the slaughter and been thus far preserved by the special providence of God, to prevent the utter extinction of the tribe. Had the Israelites succeeded to the utmost of their wishes, they would have cut them off entirely.

14. *Benjamin came again.* The scanty remnant of the tribe returned

saved alive of the women of Jabesh-gilead: and yet so they sufficed them not.

15 And the people [k]repented them for Benjamin, because that the Lord had made a breach in the tribes of Israel.

16 ¶ Then the elders of the congregation said, How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing the women are destroyed out of Benjamin?

17 And they said, *There must be* an inheritance for them that be escaped of Benjamin, that a tribe be not destroyed out of Israel.

18 Howbeit, we may not give them wives of our daughters: [l]for the children of Israel have sworn, saying, Cursed *be* he that giveth a wife to Benjamin.

19 Then they said, Behold, *there is* a feast of the Lord in Shiloh yearly *in a place* which *is* on the north side of Beth-el,

[k] ver. 6.

[l] ver. 1. ch. 11. 35.

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from their place of retreat; assured of safety, they came again into the midst of Israel.——¶ *Yet so they sufficed not.* Heb. ולא מצאו להם כן *velo matzeu lâhem kën, and they found not for them so;* i. e. found not enough; there was still a remainder of two hundred left unsupplied.

15. *The people repented them.* Rather, 'commiserated, or were grieved about Benjamin their brother.'——¶ *The Lord had made.* Had permitted to be made, had so ordered things in his providence that a breach was made. The divine permissions are incessantly spoken of in the Scriptures as positive acts. The same event which is referred to men as far as it is a sin, is referred to God as far as it is a punishment. It is in this sense that the prophet's language is to be interpreted, 'Is there evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?'

17. There must be *an inheritance for them that be escaped of Benjamin.* Or, Heb. 'the inheritance (i. e. of the whole tribe of Benjamin) (is or belongs to) the escaped remnant of Benjamin.' We must therefore procure wives for them all, that they may be capable of possessing and cultivating the whole of their territory.

19. *A feast of the Lord in Shiloh.* That is, a festival. In modern acceptation, 'feast,' implies a banquet or eating entertainment, but this is not necessarily included in the Scriptural sense of the term. It often means no more than a festive occasion, however celebrated, and probably has that import here. But what particular solemnity is intended it is impossible to determine. It might have been either the passover, pentecost, or feast of tabernacles, all of which were celebrated at that time of the year, when the vines were in full leaf, so that the Benjamites might easily conceal themselves in the vineyards.——¶ *On the north side of Beth-el.* This is a particular indication of the situation, not of Shiloh, but of the place in the neighborhood where the young women were likely to come to dance. It is probably thus precisely described, that the Benjamites might not mistake the place. It was not certain that the young women would come there (v. 21), but it was probable, the custom being common.

on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Beth-el to Shechem, and on the south of Lebonah.

20 Therefore they commanded the children of Benjamin, saying, Go, and lie in wait in the vineyards;

21 And see, and behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out [m]to dance in dances, then come ye out of the vineyards, and catch you every man his wife of the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin.

22 And it shall be, when their fathers or their brethren come unto us to complain, that we will say unto them, Be favorable unto them for our sakes: because we reserved not to each man his wife in the war: for ye did not give unto them at this time, *that* ye should be guilty.

23 And the children of Benja-

The Orientals generally have no places in their towns, where assemblies may be held for festivity and dancing. It is therefore customary to hold such assemblies in some pleasant places in the neighborhood, in the gardens or plantations, or in small valleys, if there be any. This is a favorite mode of enjoyment with the women. There are certain occasions of annual recurrence in which the women are allowed this indulgence in the fullest extent, and thus they form large parties, which go out to amuse themselves with music, dancing, and such other recreations, as are common among females. The approaches of the place where they assemble are now usually guarded by eunuchs to prevent intrusion. The different sexes never participate in each other's amusements; and this was the case in the times of the Bible; for we never read of any amusement or festivity in which they mingled; and if men had in this instance been present with the daughters of Shiloh, the Benjamites would not so easily have secured their prey. (*Pict. Bible.*)—— ¶ *Lebonah.* Maundrell supposes the site of the ancient Lebonah to be occupied either by Khan Leben, situated on the eastern side of a 'delicious vale,' four leagues south from Shechem, and two leagues north from Beth-el, or by the village of Leban which is on the opposite side. It is eight hours, or about twenty-four miles from Jerusalem, according to Dr. Richardson.

21. *Catch you every man his wife.* Heb. איש אשתו *ish ishto, a woman, his wife.* Seize and carry off a *woman*, whom he is, from that hour, to consider as his *wife.*

22. *Be favorable unto them for our sakes.* Rather, Heb. חנונו אותם *'honnunu othâm, be gracious to us with them, or, as it respects them.* The reasons urged for this clemency they go on immediately to state.——¶ *Because we reserved not to each man his wife in the war.* Intimating that they were conscious of having done wrong in the indiscriminate slaughter of the women of Benjamin; that they ought at least to have reserved enough to furnish wives for the remnant that survived. By this construction of their vow not to match with them, they would, if possible, atone for the rashness of their vow

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[m] See Ex. 15. 20. ch. 11. 34. 1 Sam. 18. 6. Jer. 31. 13.

min did so, and took *them* wives, according to their number, of them that danced, whom they caught: and they went and returned unto their inheritance, and [n] repaired the cities, and dwelt in them.

24 And the children of Israel departed thence at that time, every man to his tribe and to his family, and they went out from thence every man to his inheritance.

25 [o] In those days *there was* no king in Israel: [p] every man did *that which was* right in his own eyes.

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[n] See ch. 20. 48.

[o] ch. 17. 6, and 18. 1, and 19. 1. [p] Deut. 12. 8. ch. 17. 6.

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to destroy them.——¶ *Ye did not give unto them at this time that ye should be guilty.* By not giving your daughters or sisters voluntarily, ye have avoided the guilt of violating your solemn vow. As they were taken by force and fraud, without your knowledge or consent, you have no reason to blame yourselves for the transaction, and the exigency of the case is so pressing, that it behooves all parties to submit to it in silence. Of the measure in general we can only say, that although they escaped by it the *literal breach* of their vow, yet it was in fact an *actual evasion* of it, and one tending to give direct license to fraud, violence, and the marriage of children without the consent of their parents. The incident, however, extenuated by circumstances, adds one more to the numerous proofs afforded by holy writ of the weakness, the folly, and pernicious consequences of precipitate vows.

23. *Went and returned unto their inheritance.* Although the end can never justify the means, yet in the present case the abducted maidens of Israel probably had no cause in the issue to rue the lot which had made them wives against their wills, or at least without their consent. The Benjamites seem to have acted towards them in the most honorable manner, and as the six hundred men shared by survivorship the inheritance of many thousands, they were probably better provided for in the things of this world, than if they had married within the bounds of their own tribes. But man's evil is evil still, though God in his sovereignty may bring good out of it.

24. *Every man to his tribe.* By comparing this with ch. 20. 47, it appears that although this was at least *four months* after the war with Benjamin, yet the forces did not disband themselves and retire to their homes, till the affair of the remnant of that tribe was finally and peaceably adjusted.

25. *No king in Israel.* Repeated undoubtedly in order to account for the disorders and enormities related in the preceding chapters. The writer informs us that these events occurred in a time of complete anarchy when every man did that which was right in his own eyes—the only apology that could be offered for such atrocious scenes. Such an impartial relation of facts so highly discreditable to his own nation, affords the strongest proof of the truth and authenticity of the whole narrative.

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